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Papers of the War Cabinet's Eastern Committee

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	Mss Eur F112/274
Date(s)	13 Mar 1918-7 Jan 1919 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 file (272 folios)
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About this record

This file is composed of papers produced by the War Cabinet's Eastern Committee, which was chaired by George Curzon for most of its existence. The file contains a complete set of printed minutes, beginning with the committee's first meeting on 28 March 1918, and concluding with its final meeting on 7 January 1919 (ff 6-214 and ff 227-272).

The file begins with two copies of a memorandum by Curzon, dated 13 March 1918, proposing the formation of the Eastern Committee. This is followed by a memorandum by Arthur James Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, approving Curzon's proposal, and a copy of a procedure for the newly created committee, outlining arrangements for committee meetings and the dissemination of information to committee members.

Also included is a set of resolutions, passed by the committee in December 1918, in order to guide British representatives at the Paris Peace conference (ff 216-225). The resolutions cover the following: the Caucasus and Armenia; Syria; Palestine; Hejaz and Arabia; Mesopotamia, Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. They are preceded by a handwritten note written by Curzon 'some years later', which remarks on how they are a 'rather remarkable forecast of the bulk of the results since obtained.'

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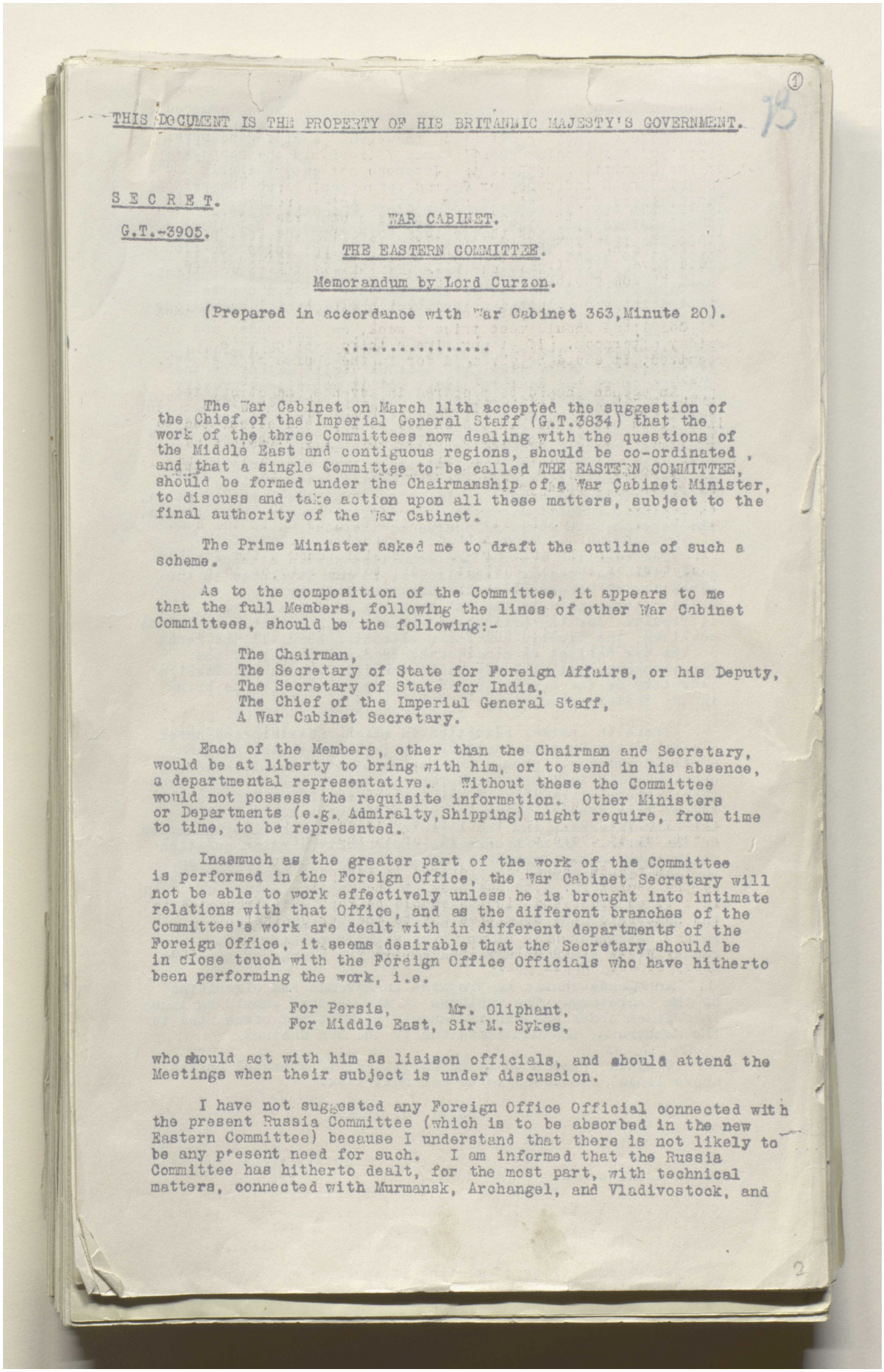

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S E C R E T.

G.T.-3905.

WAR CABINET.

THE EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Memorandum by Lord Curzon.

(Prepared in accordance with War Cabinet 363, Minute 20).

.....

The War Cabinet on March 11th accepted the suggestion of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (G.T.3834) that the work of the three Committees now dealing with the questions of the Middle East and contiguous regions, should be co-ordinated, and that a single Committee to be called THE EASTERN COMMITTEE, should be formed under the Chairmanship of a War Cabinet Minister, to discuss and take action upon all these matters, subject to the final authority of the War Cabinet.

The Prime Minister asked me to draft the outline of such a scheme.

As to the composition of the Committee, it appears to me that the full Members, following the lines of other War Cabinet Committees, should be the following:-

The Chairman,
The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, or his Deputy,
The Secretary of State for India,
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff,
A War Cabinet Secretary.

Each of the Members, other than the Chairman and Secretary, would be at liberty to bring with him, or to send in his absence, a departmental representative. Without these the Committee would not possess the requisite information. Other Ministers or Departments (e.g. Admiralty, Shipping) might require, from time to time, to be represented.

Inasmuch as the greater part of the work of the Committee is performed in the Foreign Office, the War Cabinet Secretary will not be able to work effectively unless he is brought into intimate relations with that Office, and as the different branches of the Committee's work are dealt with in different departments of the Foreign Office, it seems desirable that the Secretary should be in close touch with the Foreign Office Officials who have hitherto been performing the work, i.e.

For Persia, Mr. Oliphant,
For Middle East, Sir M. Sykes,

who should act with him as liaison officials, and should attend the Meetings when their subject is under discussion.

I have not suggested any Foreign Office Official connected with the present Russia Committee (which is to be absorbed in the new Eastern Committee) because I understand that there is not likely to be any present need for such. I am informed that the Russia Committee has hitherto dealt, for the most part, with technical matters, connected with Murmansk, Archangel, and Vladivostock, and

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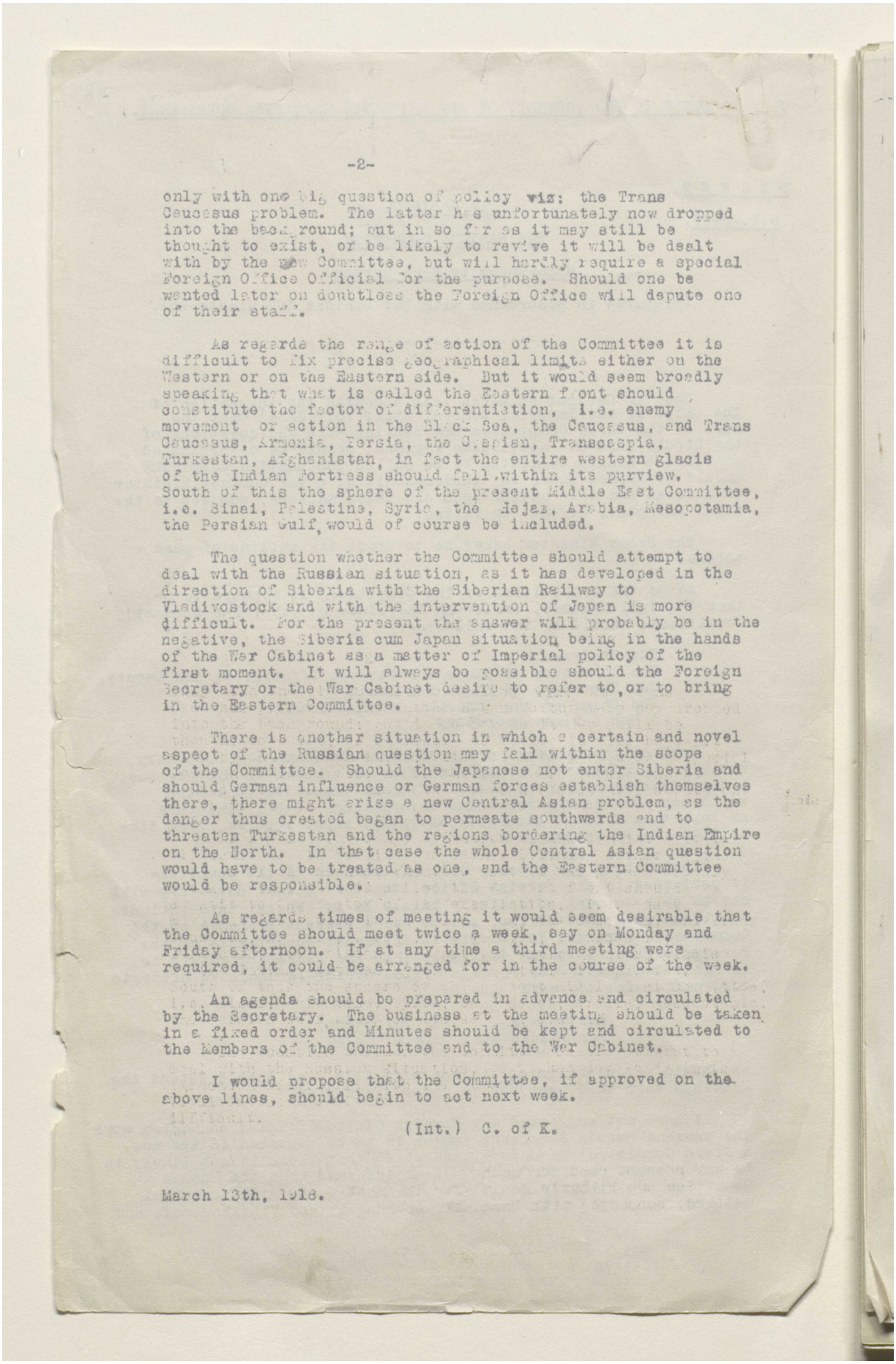

only with one big question of policy viz: the Trans Caucasus problem. The latter has unfortunately now dropped into the background; but in so far as it may still be thought to exist, or be likely to revive it will be dealt with by the new Committee, but will hardly require a special Foreign Office Official for the purpose. Should one be wanted later on doubtless the Foreign Office will depute one of their staff.

As regards the range of action of the Committee it is difficult to fix precise geographical limits either on the Western or on the Eastern side. But it would seem broadly speaking that what is called the Eastern front should constitute the factor of differentiation, i.e. enemy movement or action in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and Trans Caucasus, Armenia, Persia, the Caspian, Transcaspia, Turkestan, Afghanistan, in fact the entire western glacis of the Indian Fortress should fall within its purview. South of this the sphere of the present Middle East Committee, i.e. Sinai, Palestine, Syria, the Hejaz, Arabia, Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf, would of course be included.

The question whether the Committee should attempt to deal with the Russian situation, as it has developed in the direction of Siberia with the Siberian Railway to Vladivostock and with the intervention of Japan is more difficult. For the present the answer will probably be in the negative, the Siberia cum Japan situation being in the hands of the War Cabinet as a matter of Imperial policy of the first moment. It will always be possible should the Foreign Secretary or the War Cabinet desire to refer to, or to bring in the Eastern Committee.

There is another situation in which a certain and novel aspect of the Russian question may fall within the scope of the Committee. Should the Japanese not enter Siberia and should German influence or German forces establish themselves there, there might arise a new Central Asian problem, as the danger thus created began to permeate southwards and to threaten Turkestan and the regions bordering the Indian Empire on the North. In that case the whole Central Asian question would have to be treated as one, and the Eastern Committee would be responsible.

As regards times of meeting it would seem desirable that the Committee should meet twice a week, say on Monday and Friday afternoon. If at any time a third meeting were required, it could be arranged for in the course of the week.

An agenda should be prepared in advance and circulated by the Secretary. The business at the meeting should be taken in a fixed order and Minutes should be kept and circulated to the Members of the Committee and to the War Cabinet.

I would propose that the Committee, if approved on the above lines, should begin to act next week.

(Int.) C. of K.

March 13th, 1918.

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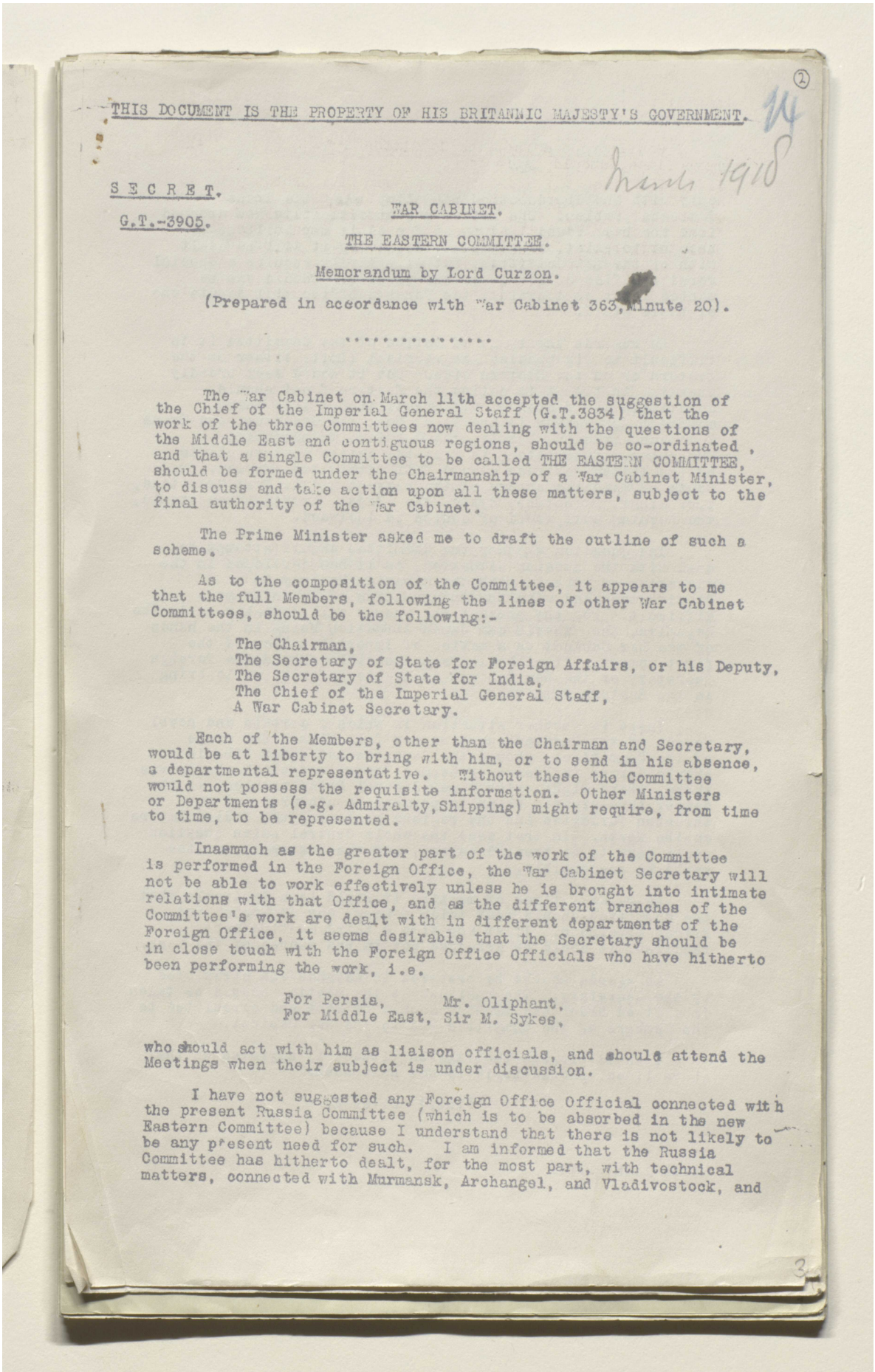

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14

March 1918

SECRET.

G.T.-3905.

WAR CABINET.

THE EASTERN COMMITTEE.

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(Prepared in accordance with War Cabinet 363, Minute 20).

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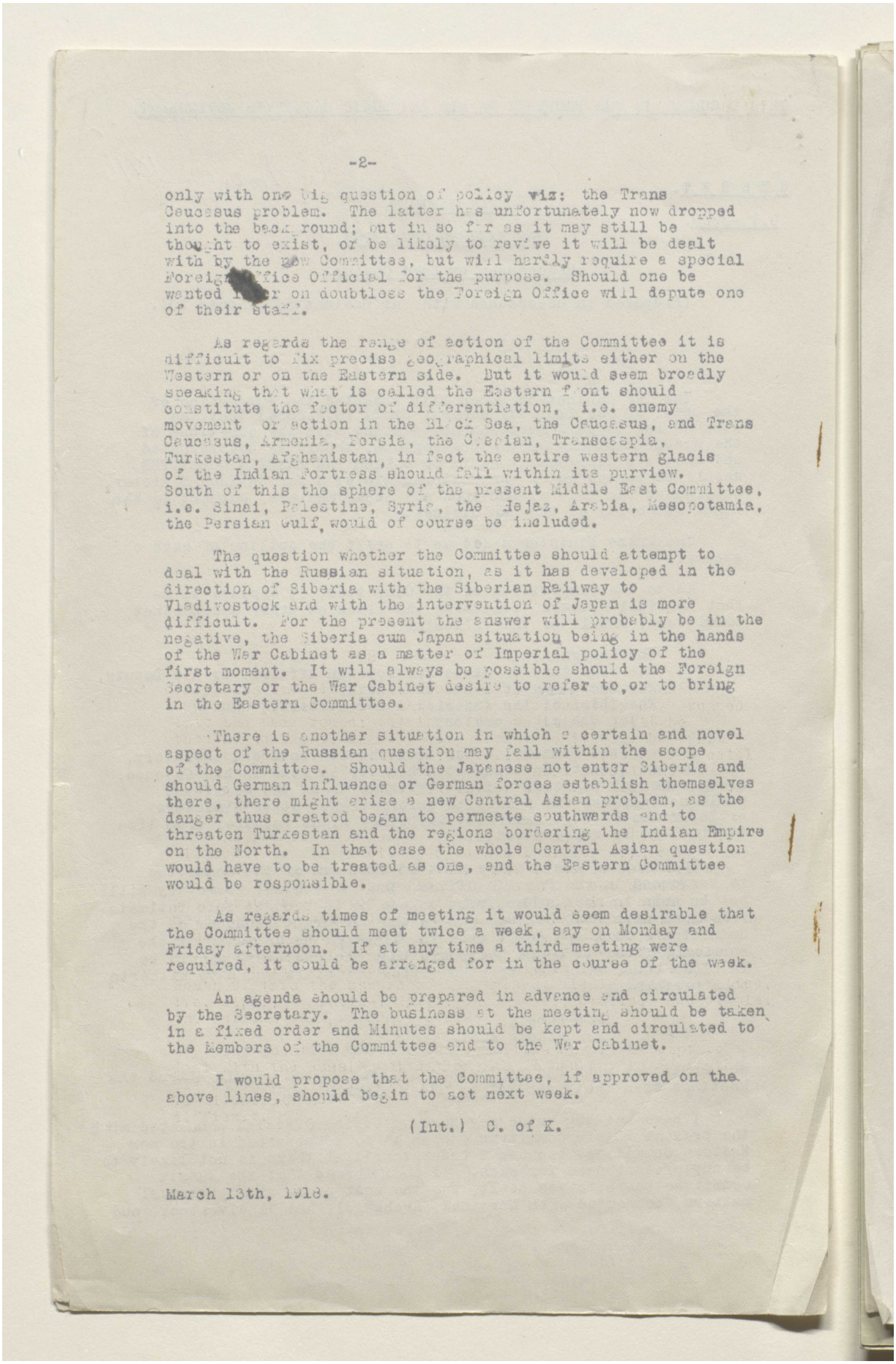

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(Int.) C. of K.

March 13th, 1918.

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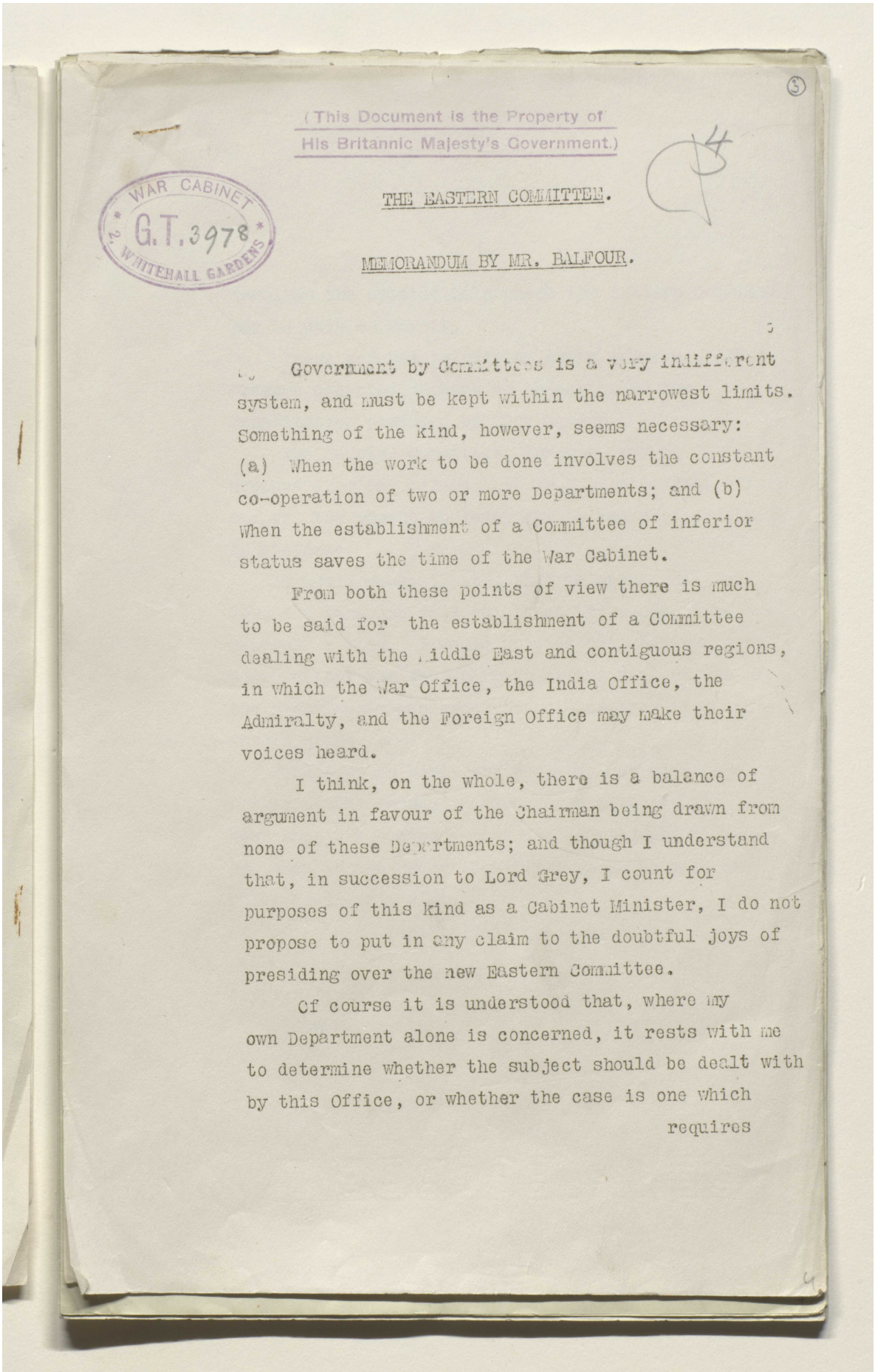

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WAR CABINET
G.T.3978
2, WHITEHALL GARDENS

THE EASTERN COMMITTEE.

MEMORANDUM BY MR. BALFOUR.

Government by Committees is a very indifferent system, and must be kept within the narrowest limits. Something of the kind, however, seems necessary: (a) When the work to be done involves the constant co-operation of two or more Departments; and (b) When the establishment of a Committee of inferior status saves the time of the War Cabinet.

From both these points of view there is much to be said for the establishment of a Committee dealing with the Middle East and contiguous regions, in which the War Office, the India Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office may make their voices heard.

I think, on the whole, there is a balance of argument in favour of the Chairman being drawn from none of these Departments; and though I understand that, in succession to Lord Grey, I count for purposes of this kind as a Cabinet Minister, I do not propose to put in any claim to the doubtful joys of presiding over the new Eastern Committee.

Of course it is understood that, where my own Department alone is concerned, it rests with me to determine whether the subject should be dealt with by this Office, or whether the case is one which requires

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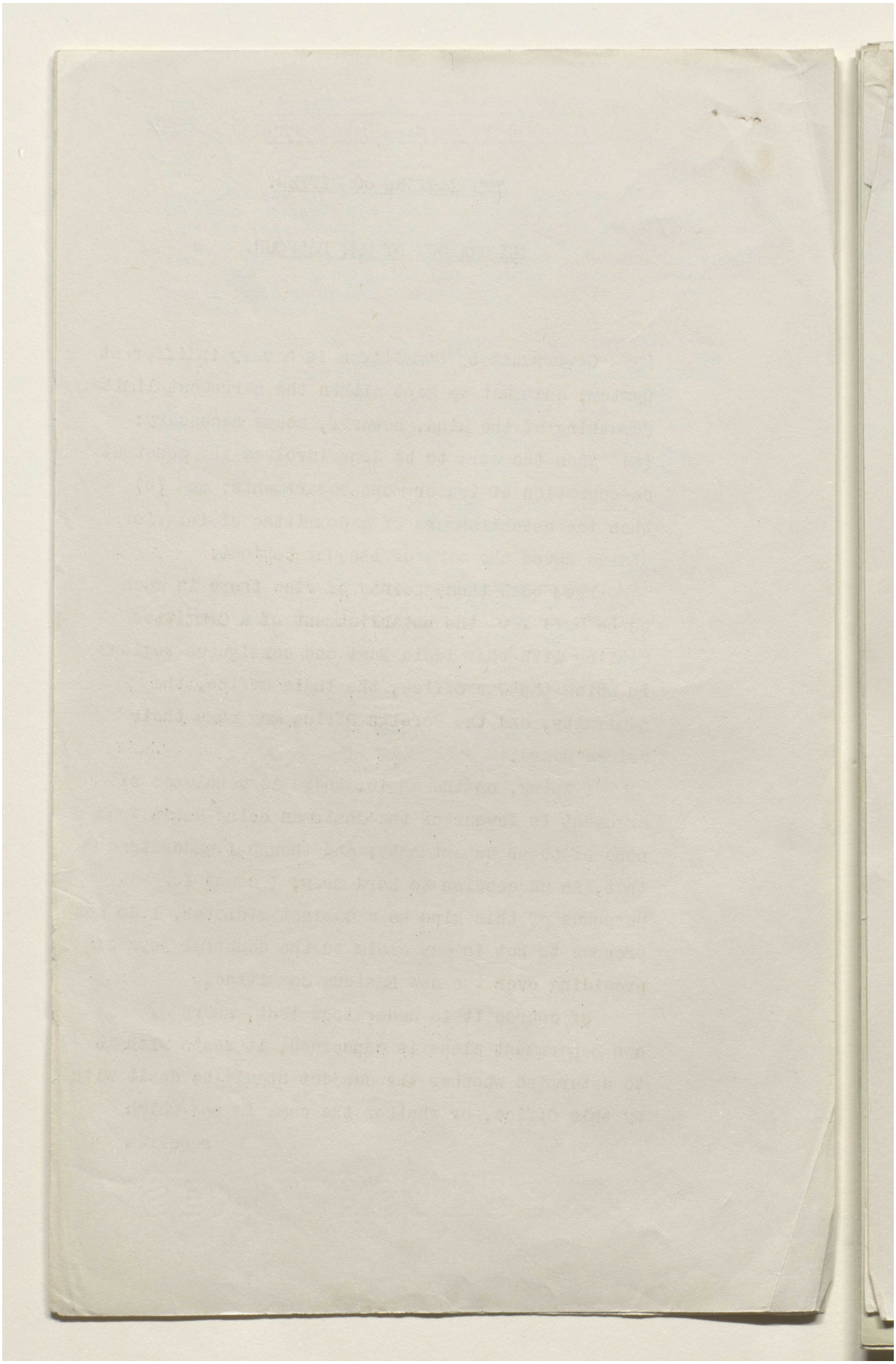

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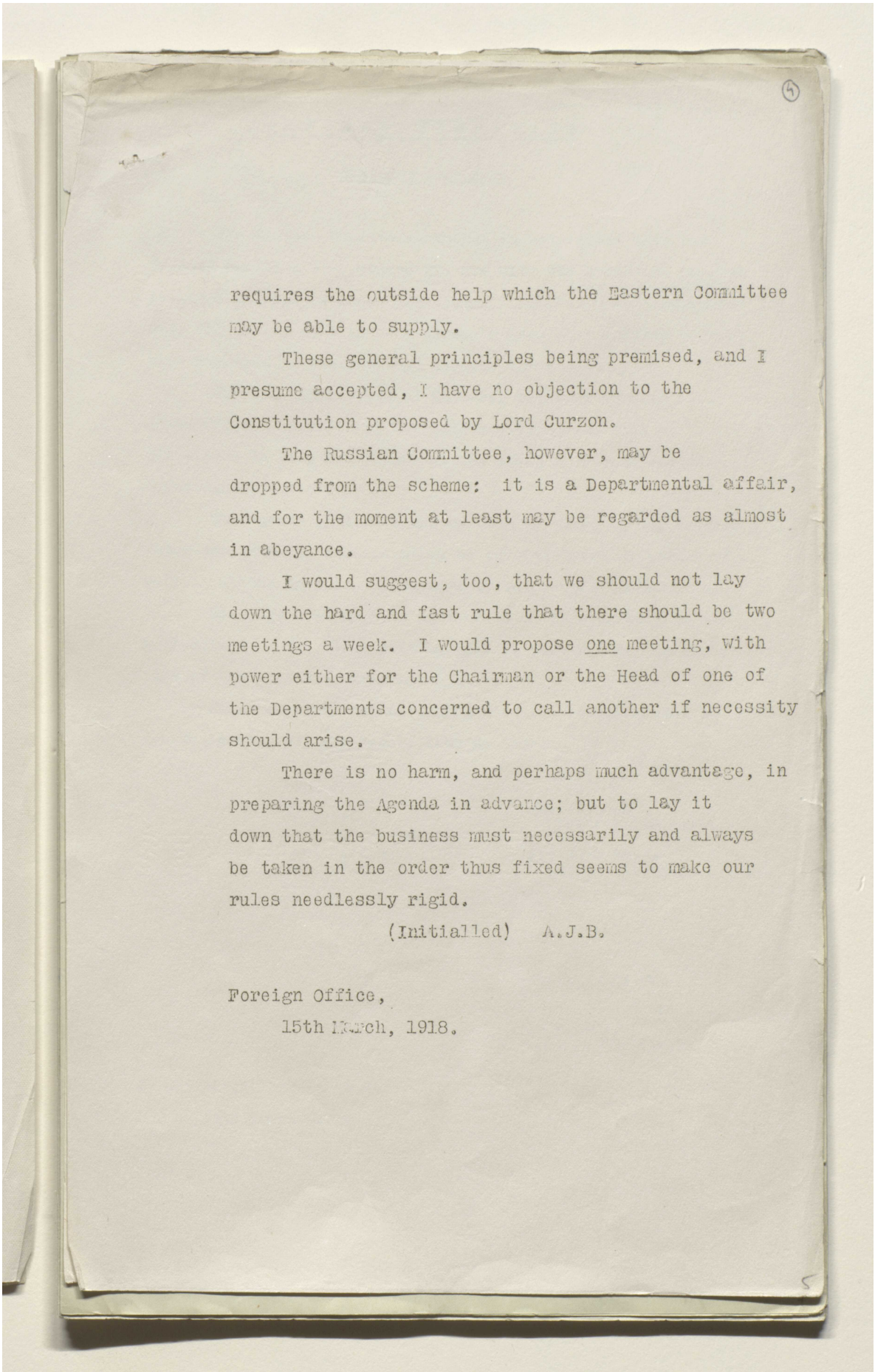

requires the outside help which the Eastern Committee may be able to supply.

These general principles being premised, and I presume accepted, I have no objection to the Constitution proposed by Lord Curzon.

The Russian Committee, however, may be dropped from the scheme: it is a Departmental affair, and for the moment at least may be regarded as almost in abeyance.

I would suggest, too, that we should not lay down the hard and fast rule that there should be two meetings a week. I would propose one meeting, with power either for the Chairman or the Head of one of the Departments concerned to call another if necessity should arise.

There is no harm, and perhaps much advantage, in preparing the Agenda in advance; but to lay it down that the business must necessarily and always be taken in the order thus fixed seems to make our rules needlessly rigid.

(Initialled) A.J.B.

Foreign Office,
15th March, 1918.

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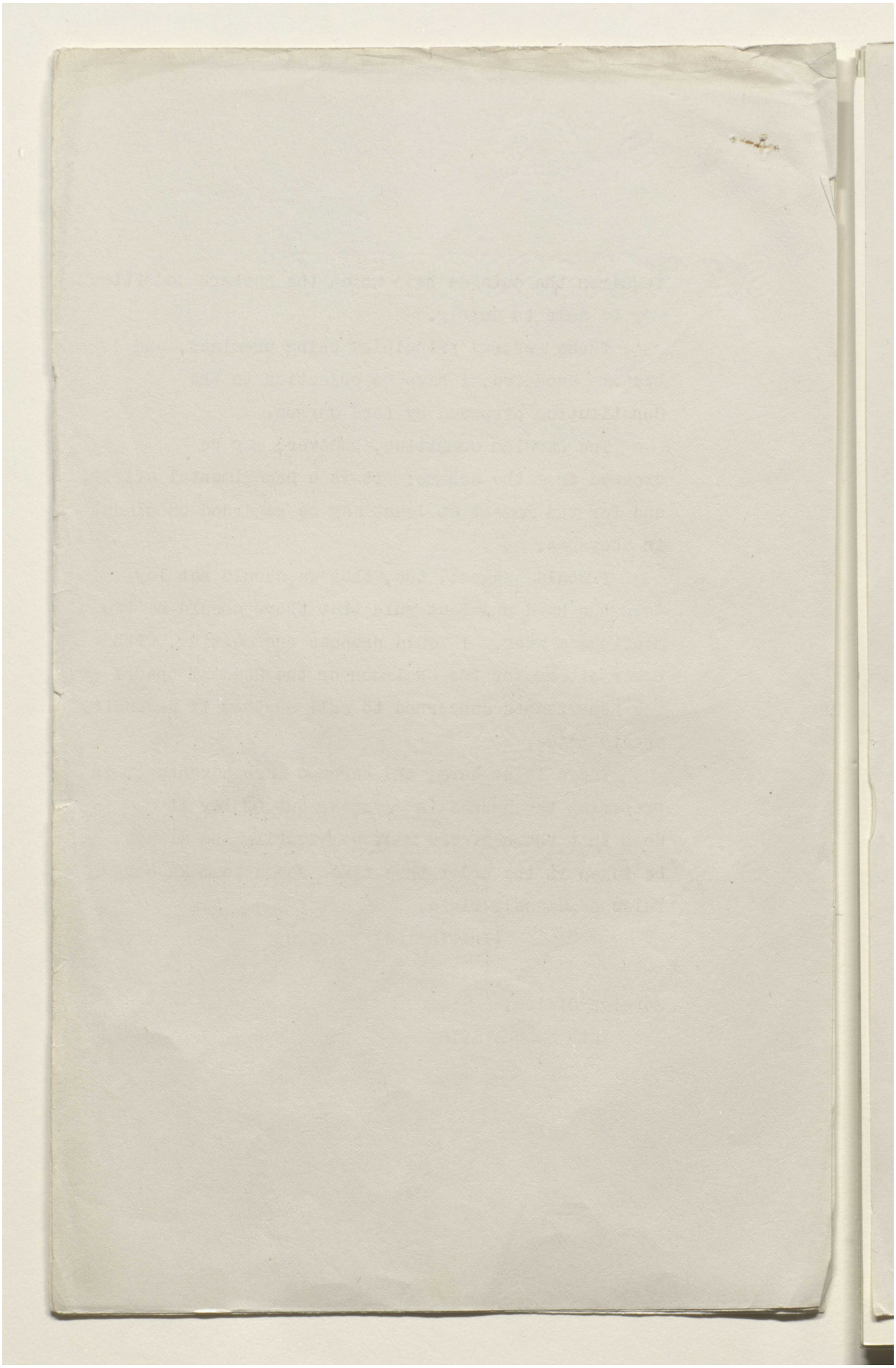

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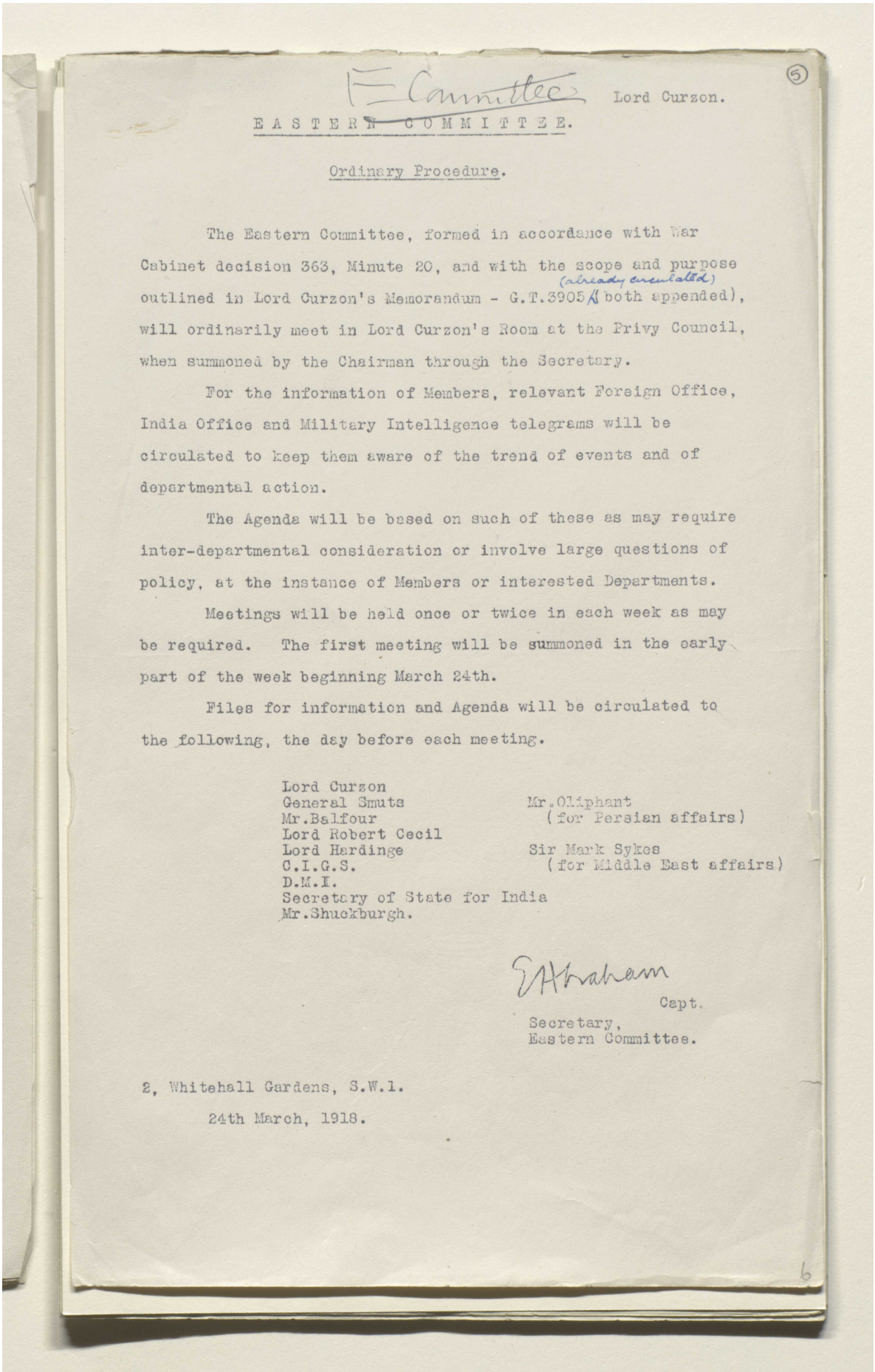

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E Committee

Lord Curzon.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Ordinary Procedure.

The Eastern Committee, formed in accordance with War Cabinet decision 363, Minute 20, and with the scope and purpose outlined in Lord Curzon's Memorandum - G.T.3905 (already circulated) both appended), will ordinarily meet in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council, when summoned by the Chairman through the Secretary.

For the information of Members, relevant Foreign Office, India Office and Military Intelligence telegrams will be circulated to keep them aware of the trend of events and of departmental action.

The Agenda will be based on such of these as may require inter-departmental consideration or involve large questions of policy, at the instance of Members or interested Departments.

Meetings will be held once or twice in each week as may be required. The first meeting will be summoned in the early part of the week beginning March 24th.

Files for information and Agenda will be circulated to the following, the day before each meeting.

Lord Curzon
General Smuts
Mr.Balfour
Lord Robert Cecil
Lord Hardinge
C.I.G.S.
D.M.I.
Secretary of State for India
Mr.Shuckburgh.
Mr.Oliphant (for Persian affairs)
Sir Mark Sykes (for Middle East affairs)

E Abraham
Capt.
Secretary,
Eastern Committee.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.

24th March, 1918.

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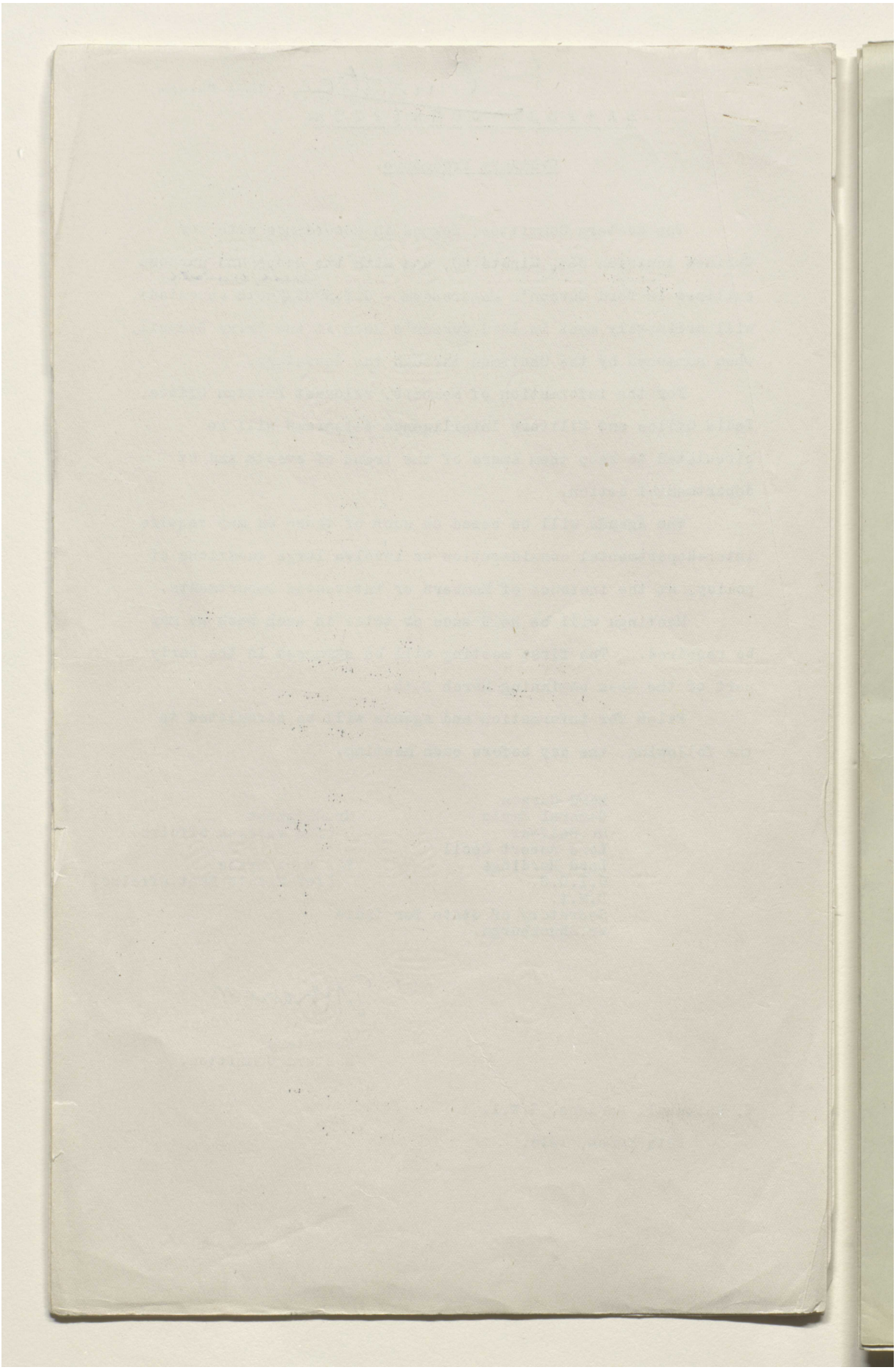

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Lord Curzon (for Record) (6)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. April 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 1st Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, March 28, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Under-Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P. (for Minutes 1 to 3).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G. (for Minutes 3 to 6).

The following were also present:

Colonel R. A. STEEL, General Staff, War Office.

SIR ROBERT CHALMERS, Mr. DUDLEY WARD, } Treasury.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Incidence of Aden Expenditure.

1. THE Committee had before them correspondence between the Government of India and the India Office and the India Office and Foreign Office (M.E.C.–107).

The position was briefly explained by the Chairman. India, having been relieved of responsibility during the war for both military and political affairs in Aden, not unnaturally claimed exemption from financial liability. It seemed, however, that the existing *modus vivendi* was to continue by agreement between the Departments concerned, subject to reconsideration at the end of the war.

Mr. Shuckburgh, on behalf of the India Office, expressed assent, with the reservation that, as the Government of India urged that retrospective effect should be given to any new arrangement made after the war, this question should remain open.

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The Committee agreed that no decision was required for the time being on the matter.

Financial Assistance to the Idrisi.

2. The Committee had before them telegram No. 519 from Sir R. Wingate (E.C.–31).

General Macdonogh expressed great doubts of the propriety of supplying more money to the Idrisi, without some assurance that he would spend it in accordance with our wishes. He might be sharing it with the Turks. It was true he had taken Loheia, but there was nothing to show that he had fought to take the place; he might have bribed the Turks out of it. There was now intelligence that the Turks were concentrating outside Loheia, and possibly he might walk out of it, as he had walked in.

The question of a British liaison officer to the Idrisi was raised.

Sir Mark Sykes pointed out that this was a delicate question, as the Idrisi, by reason of his peculiar sanctity, would not allow himself to be seen by a British officer save in the dark with face veiled.

It appeared, however, from the telegram cited above that an Indian liaison official was going to Loheia, and that Sir R. Wingate was trying to obtain a qualified British liaison officer attached to the Idrisi's forces.

The Committee felt that it would be unsafe to send the Idrisi more money without any means of checking his use of it.

It was decided—

That a telegram should be sent from the Foreign Office asking Sir R. Wingate what had been done, or what was proposed in this respect, and expressing the doubts of the Committee about the use the Idrisi made of the money supplied him.

Sir R. Wingate should be asked whether he considered the presence of a British liaison officer would afford the security desired, and what steps were being taken to appoint one.

Attitude of Emir Faisal and the Sherif.

The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir R. Wingate (E.C.–19).

Lord Curzon drew the attention of the Committee to various signs of disquiet in the mind of the Sherif. The causes of this disquiet might be that the military situation was represented to him as disadvantageous to us, or that Zionism and French designs in Syria caused him misgivings. The intrigues of his sons with the Turks might be symptoms of this state of mind or additional disturbing factors.

Lord R. Cecil added that he might also be anxious about rumoured negotiations between us and the Turks, to the detriment of the Arabs. There was evidence that rumours of this kind had reached him. It was clearly desirable to do something to dispel his doubts.

It was pointed out by General Smuts that the most serious trouble lay in the Sherif's knowledge of the Sykes–Picot agreement, the misleading version of which, issued by the Bolsheviks, might have affected him. He might argue that if things went well with us Damascus would fall not to the Arabs, but to the French.

The abrogation of the agreement was discussed in its various bearings. It was admitted that it would be difficult to meet the French objection that we, having gained our share, had nothing to lose by abrogating the agreement, while the French share was still to be got. Italy's aims would also have to be regarded as a contingency in any discussion of the question.

As there seemed a possibility that M. Gout, of the French Foreign Office, might persuade his Government to abandon the agreement, save as an expression of aspirations recognised by us,

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Sir Mark Sykes undertook to write to him privately and try to prevail on him to come to London and talk the matter over.

It was also agreed—

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should have a memorandum prepared in the Foreign Office reviewing the whole case.

Concerning the alleged intrigue of Faisal with the Turks, a possible explanation was indicated by General Macdonogh. Faisal's overtures might be intended to deceive the Turks and delay their threatened advance on Tafileh until General Allenby had pushed further on.

Sir Mark Sykes suggested that, as British forces had now crossed the Jordan and were operating in an area unmortgaged by any agreement, attractive offers of local authority might be made to Faisal.

It was agreed—

That General Clayton's opinion on this suggestion should be obtained; and, with a view to encouraging the Sherif's faith in us, it was decided that the Foreign Office should send a full telegram to General Clayton explaining the difficulties and asking his advice.

Military Movements in Central Persia and Bakhtiaristan.

4. The Committee had before them two telegrams from Sir C. Marling (E.C.–4 and E.C.–16) answering the questions referred to him in the last meeting of the Persia Committee.

The Chairman pointed out that both on the project of an advance to Ispahan and on that of despatching General Dunsterville's officers into Bakhtiaristan our representative in Tehran expressed himself emphatically. He was opposed to both. He considered that a move to Ispahan would not deter a *coup de main* in Tehran, that it would alienate the Cossack division which was our sole support there, and would probably antagonise the Bakhtiaris.

For the last-named he suggested more conciliatory methods than the despatch of officers from General Dunsterville's mission.

It was desirable that a fuller explanation of these methods than appeared in telegram E.C.–16 should be obtained from Sir C. Marling, against whose deliberate and strongly-worded advice it would not be right to proceed.

Attention was drawn by Lord Hardinge to a telegram from Sir P. Sykes, No. 255 (E.C.–36). As this telegram had not been seen by the other members of the Committee, copies were obtained and circulated.

It appeared from this that Sir P. Sykes differed from Sir C. Marling on the expediency of occupying Ispahan.

It was generally agreed that the passage in this telegram, to the effect that Ispahan could be occupied in *one* week after receipt of orders, could not be depended on and must be considered a cyphering error. At least four weeks would be required.

Further, it was pointed out that the crux of the situation was not Central Persia, but Tehran, and that the opinion of our representative there, backed by that of the Government of India, must outweigh that of an officer in South Persia (see telegram dated the 25th March, 1918, from Viceroy (E.C.–13), doubtless including the views of the Commander-in-Chief in India). Having got to Ispahan, we should probably have to push on to Kum, or even to Tehran—in other words, to launch forth into military occupation of the whole of Persia. This, apart from political considerations affecting our relations with the Russians and with the Persians, would involve a strain on the military resources of India, which could not be undertaken lightly. Our agreed policy was to push

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forward in North-West Persia, through Hamadan to the Caspian. If we succeeded in this we should control the capital far better than from Ispahan. Meanwhile, we should endeavour to influence the Bakhtiari from Ahwaz, where we were already established.

Dissent from this view was expressed by the military members and by Lord Islington. The real danger was primarily to Tehran threatened by a pro-German Jangali invasion, which would be followed by a propagandist tide sweeping southward and eastward towards Afghanistan. In this region lay our greatest danger. Our cordon on the Perso-Afghan frontier was very thin; our cordon between Mesopotamia and the Caspian did not yet exist. A show of force in the centre might dispel the whole danger; inaction would increase it.

The balance of opinion, however, was in favour of adhering to the previously agreed policy.

It was decided—

That the Foreign Office should obtain in detail Sir C. Marling's plans for dealing with the Bakhtiari.

Financial Assistance in respect of Hamadan and elsewhere.

5. The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir C. Marling (E.C.–29) advocating relief for the distress in Hamadan.

On behalf of the Treasury, Sir R. Chalmers stated that the preliminary assurance required was that stores of grain did exist in the area. He was now satisfied that they did (see telegram No. 252 from Tehran (E.C.–37). Secondly, he asked whether Hamadan could be regarded as a distinct enclave or whether influx of money or grain there would not cause a flow of population from the rest of Persia to set towards it. This might increase our liabilities *ad infinitum*.

It was pointed out that Hamadan could be considered in isolation from the rest of Persia, as it was a stage on our projected advance to the Caspian. Supply of funds or grain there could be considered as a form of penetration in advance of our troops.

Lord Islington stated that the India Office agreed to pay half the cost in respect of food (military expenditure, costs of roads, &c., excluded).

On this condition Sir R. Chalmers agreed, on behalf of the Treasury, to furnish the necessary finances.

He asked, however, that the Treasury should be relieved as soon as possible of expenditure on behalf of the Russian troops, who did not appear to be of any further service to us.

Mr. D. Ward stated that there was an estimate of 6,000,000 kran on behalf of this force for April; 193,000*l*. had already been paid.

It was decided—

That enquiry should be made by the Foreign Office from Sir C. Marling regarding the situation of these troops and the advisability of continuing or suspending payments to them.

Suggested Action by Amir of Afghanistan for Recovery of Panjdeh.

6. The Committee had before them a note by the Political Department, India Office (E.C.–12).

The Committee adopted the view that no suggestions should be made to the Amir. He should be left to act, if at all, entirely on his own initiative.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
March 28, 1918.

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SECRET.

E.C. 2nd Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, April 5, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.

The Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Under-Secretary of State for India.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P. (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH.

The following were also present:

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. DUDLEY WARD, Treasury.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Circulation of Agenda.

1. AT the outset, General Macdonogh requested that the Agenda and relevant papers should be circulated at such time before the meeting that members should have at least twenty-four hours to consider them.

The Chairman explained that, as telegrams arrived daily at frequent intervals, he had thought it better to arrange for the issue of the Agenda so as to include the latest possible information.

It was agreed, however, that the Secretary should issue the papers twenty-four hours before the time of meeting. Should important despatches arrive in the interval, a supplementary circulation should, if possible, be arranged.

Action in respect to Emir Faisal.

2. General Macdonogh further requested that Item 3 on the Agenda should be postponed as there had not been time to consider the problems raised in telegram No. 1055 from General Clayton (E.C. 66).

Sir Mark Sykes concurred, and it was agreed that the Departments concerned should inform the Secretary when they were ready for the question to be discussed.

[365—1]

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Action in respect to Bakhtiari.

3. The Committee considered Sir C. Marling's reply (telegram No. 269—E.C. 52) to the telegram (No. 175—E.C. 39) sent as a result of the last meeting (Minute 4).

After a detailed examination of the proposals contained in this reply, it appeared to the Committee that they were not in a position to adjudicate on the distribution or adequacy of bribes to individual Bakhtiari Khans. This could be best arranged by allotting a lump sum to Sir C. Marling for bestowal at his discretion.

Mr. Dudley Ward, on behalf of the Treasury, expressed some misgivings at the issue of a blank cheque for this purpose, and asked for some assurance that this course would not lead to an indefinite extension of expenditure.

It was pointed out that the Bakhtiari Khans were limited in number, and that Sir C. Marling would find means of limiting their demands, which he had expressed quite roughly and doubtless at the maximum.

General Macdonogh questioned whether any advantage would be gained by purchasing the Khans, unless they were asked to accept, as a condition of payment, the raising of levies under British officers and N.C.O.'s. In view, however, of the adverse opinion expressed by Sir C. Marling and the Political Officer at Bagdad (No. 3011—E.C. 67), it was concluded that no such conditions would be opportune.

It was also observed that the money already spent on the Bakhtiari had at least kept the bulk of them from joining our enemies.

It was decided—

That the Foreign Office should send a telegram to Sir C. Marling giving him leave to negotiate, but asking him to name a figure before the allotment of a credit on this behalf. On receipt of his reply a sum would be fixed in consultation between the Foreign Office and the Treasury.

As to the suggested loan of two guns to the Ilkhani, it was decided—

That Sir C. Marling's advice should be followed, as this loan might enable the Ilkhani to deal with the Kuhgelu tribe and restore the security of the Lynch Road.

Action in respect to Colonel Bicharakof.

4. The Committee had before them telegrams 262, 263, 271, and 274 from Sir C. Marling (E.C. 40, E.C. 41, E.C. 54, and E.C. 55 respectively), also a memorandum by the General Staff (E.C. 64).

The General Staff memorandum on this subject was approved. A draft telegram based on it was produced by Mr. Oliphant and read by the chairman. This draft was agreed to and will be circulated.

It was pointed out that Sir C. Marling's answer (telegram No. 274—E.C. 55) to telegram No. 174 (E.C. 47) was very inadequate and gave no explanation of the large sums the Treasury was still called upon to disburse on behalf of Russian troops (see Minute 5 of the 1st Meeting).

If the Russian troops amounted to no more than the estimated 1,000 men under Colonel Bicharakof, the necessity of further subsidies to him was not evident and the scale at which these troops were remunerated was manifestly exorbitant.

It was decided—

To ask Sir C. Marling for further information on this point.

The Director of Military Intelligence stated that he had telegraphed to Colonel Clutterbuck, of the Hamadan Board, for information as to the Russian troops for whom these credits were asked.

Lord Robert Cecil enquired whether details of this kind would not be better left to the Russia Committee, as being part of the

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Trans-Caucasian problem, with which that committee dealt. It was agreed, however, that this was at present a Persian question and should consequently be dealt with by the Eastern Committee. Moreover, the terms of reference of the Eastern Committee placed Trans-Caucasia within its sphere and, should there be a revival of active policy in that quarter, the Eastern and not the Russia Committee would be responsible.

Colonel Stokes.

5. Attention was drawn by the chairman to telegram No. 258 from Sir C. Marling (E.C. 68) in which the Minister begged that the War Office should reconsider their orders removing Colonel Stokes from Tehran.

It was pointed out by General Macdonogh that this question had been discussed at previous meetings of the Persia Committee, and that as no decision to the contrary had been expressed, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had issued orders for Colonel Stokes to join General Dunsterville at Hamadan as Chief Intelligence Officer. These instructions had been issued before the receipt of Sir C. Marling's telegram.

It was decided—

That this should be explained to Sir C. Marling and that he should be asked whether he still adhered as strongly to his view that Colonel Stokes should remain at Tehran.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
April 5, 1918.

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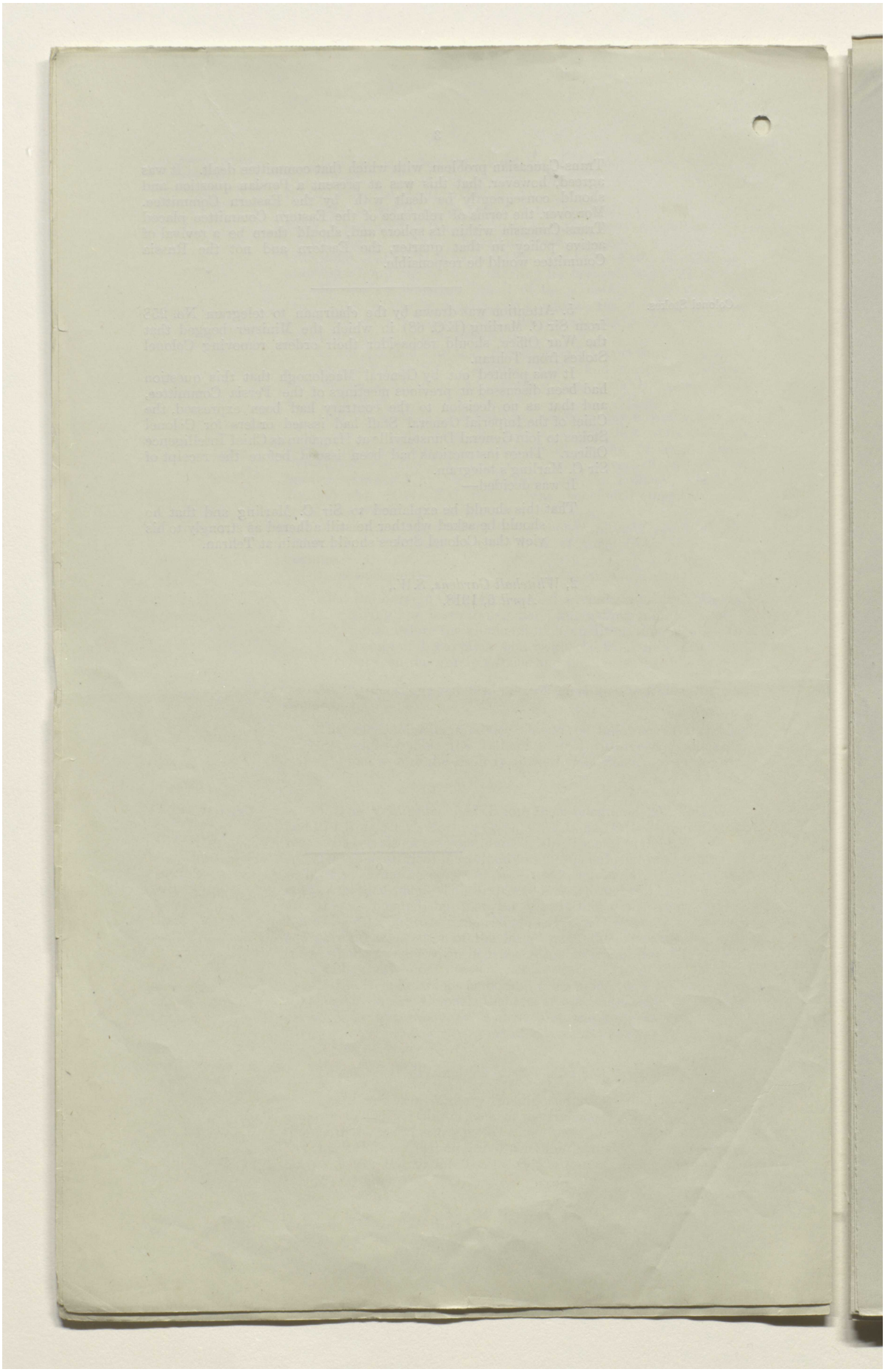

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E.C. 3rd Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of the Third Meeting.

The Third Meeting of the Eastern Committee was held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, April 12, 1918, *at* 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office.

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Under-Secretary of State for India, India Office.

MR. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Lieut-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, representing the C.I.G.S., War Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence, War Office.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Action in Respect to Emir Faisal.

1. The Committee had before them a Foreign Office Memorandum, commenting on General Clayton's telegram (E.C.–66), consideration of which had been postponed from the last meeting (see Minute 2).

Sir Mark Sykes, who was unavoidably absent, had, in consultation with the Director of Military Intelligence, at the Chairman's request, prepared a draft reply to General Clayton. The draft was read to the Committee by the Chairman, and, after slight alteration, adopted.

It was decided—

That it should be telegraphed by the Foreign Office to General Clayton. (This telegram (E.C.–123) will be circulated later.)

Action in Respect to Idrisi.

2. The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir R. Wingate (E.C.–75), giving an account of the present condition of the Idrisi, a letter from Brigadier-General Beatty, retrospective in character (E.C.–89), and a later telegram from Sir R. Wingate (E.C.–111) answering the questions raised at the first meeting (Minute 2).

Sir R. Wingate recommended the grant to the Idrisi of 25,000*l.* as a present for past services (see E.C. 31), and a monthly grant of 12,000*l.* for the future.

The Director of Military Intelligence pointed out that the Idrisi

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had received 35,000*l.* in the last six months. This represented a rate of 5,800*l.* a month. It was open to doubt whether he had earned that amount, and it appeared excessive to add a gratuity of 25,000*l.*, while more than doubling the monthly subvention.

The Committee concurred with this opinion, but, in view of the urgent representations of Sir R. Wingate, it was decided—

That consent to the gift of 25,000*l.* should be withheld; that the monthly subsidy should be raised to 10,000*l.*, and that Sir R. Wingate should be informed of this decision by the Foreign Office.

Persian Cabinet.

3. E.C. 103 from Sir C. Marling was read, as well as a later telegram (E.C. 112), produced at the meeting by Mr. Oliphant. No action or change in the policy previously adopted appeared necessary.

South Persia Rifles.

4. Attention was drawn to E.C. 86, which was read and noted.

Extension of the Nushki Railway.

5. The question was raised by the Chairman. E.C. 90 was read. It appeared from this that the original intention of continuing the line to Rabat, and ultimately into Seistan, was abandoned by the authorities in India, in favour of a plan to extend the railway into Persian territory.

It was felt that this was a proposition involving considerable political problems. Moreover, strategically this did not appear to be the most useful railway construction that could be undertaken in Persia, should any be possible.

Lord Islington said that the India Office had written to the Foreign Office and War Office suggesting that, while the question of extending this railway into Persia required mature consideration, a preliminary survey, as proposed in E.C. 90, might usefully be undertaken.

It was decided—

That the India Office should obtain the full views of the Government of India on the subject of an extension of the line to Rabat.

Position in Caucasus.

6. Note was taken of E.C. 101.

It did not appear possible to take or recommend any action for the time being.

Threat to India by Enemy Action.

7. The Chairman pointed out that on the subject of the various enemy movements threatening India, there had been no comprehensive appreciation from the Government of India itself. In the event of sudden danger in Turkestan or Afghanistan it would be well for the Committee to have received and considered advice from India. It could be presumed that the Government of India had ample material for a full appreciation of the possible eventualities, and it was decided—

That the India Office should request the Government of India to furnish one to the Committee.

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April 12, 1918.

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SECRET. 4

E.C. 4th Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, April 22, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieut.-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Under-Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Also present:

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., India Office.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

British Policy in Persia.

1. The Committee had under consideration a telegram from Lord Reading (E.C.–129) concerning the share America might take in furthering Allied policy in Persia. Previous pourparlers on this subject were explained in their sequence by the Chairman, who read E.C.–159 and E.C.–160.

It was pointed out that the declaration which the United States Government had not thought fit to back in February, but the execution of which they now seemed disposed to guarantee, was at this date less appropriate. The declaration had not been made to the Persian Government, and now our policy could be inferred from the course of action in which we were engaged. The burden and responsibilities were British, and it was scarcely desirable to allow any other Power to stand bail for our future acts. This could only cause trouble by inducing the Persians to appeal to our sureties for redress against us, if they chose to complain that we were not carrying out our promises to the letter.

Attention was drawn to E.C.–150 and the question of a French participation in Persian affairs in addition to the American.

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It was agreed that the same objections applied.
The Committee therefore decided—

That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should reply to Lord Reading's telegram (E.C.–129) in the sense that we did not propose to make a declaration at present, and that in consequence there was no need for action by the United States of America.

Position of Allied Forces in North-West Persia.

2. General Macdonogh read to the Committee a statement of the present position of Allied forces in North-West Persia (Appendix). Though the weather still hampered developments, the statement revealed a situation which the Committee considered satisfactory. The Jangalis meanwhile had not made much use of their opportunities. Mr. Balfour stated that he would like to see action taken against them. In this connection Mr. Oliphant read a letter which the Foreign Office had received that morning and which suggested a plan for dealing with Kuchik Khan. He proposed to enquire Sir C. Marling's views on the scheme.

It was agreed that the Foreign Office should consult Sir C. Marling as proposed.

Situation in the Caucasus.

3. General Macdonogh gave the Committee some information, derived from Colonel Pike at Tiflis, concerning developments in the Caucasus. It was noted that the Caspian fleet was reported to be under Bolshevik control.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that though he had not as yet approached M. Trotzki specifically concerning this naval force, he would, if a suitable occasion arose, commend the matter to his consideration, as the co-operation of the Caspian fleet was of great importance to us if we were to save Baku from the enemy.

Mission to Central Asia.

4. The Committee had before them a Memorandum by the General Staff (E.C.–163), certain telegrams relating to Meshed (E.C.–130 and E.C.–131), and correspondence concerning a mission to Kashgar (E.C.–135, E.C.–152, and E.C.–153).

The mission to Kashgar did not appear to give rise to any difficulty for the time being.

The Chairman read a telegram from the Viceroy (E.C.–181) transmitting a message from Kashgar, in which doubt was expressed whether, without a Bolshevik passport, anyone could safely enter Russian Turkestan.

As to the mission to Meshed, at present instructed to abstain from propaganda and from entering Russian territory (E.C.–131), it seemed probable that no other instructions could for the time being be issued. Bokhara was in Russian territory. Any action in that direction must be subordinated to our general policy in relation to the Bolshevik Government. We could not encourage their opponents in Asia while courting them in Europe. Any action in Transcaspia would raise the Turkoman question, which was entirely distinct both geographically and politically from that of Turkestan. Turkestan again raised the very different issues of Russian and Afghan Turkestan. Finally, in any contemplated movements in the direction of Kushk or the Afghan frontier, strict regard must be had for the susceptibilities of the Amir. It did not appear so far any plan had been thought out.

General Macdonogh suggested that Colonel Redl might be given more latitude than was granted him in his orders from the Commander-in-Chief, India (E.C.–131). He should be able to get

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into touch with the Emir of Bokhara and discover his intentions. It might, for instance, be possible for a native officer to reach Bokhara, and he mentioned that Captain Bray was a member of the Meshed Mission and would be useful in connection with the deputation which was being sent by the King of the Hedjaz to Turkestan (see E.C.–164). If we took no action it was certain that the Germans would forestall us.

General Sir H. Cox drew attention to the sections of the Trans-Caspian Railway from the Caspian to Merv and from Merv to Kushk, which afford the shortest and most direct route to India and control of which could be obtained from Meshed.

Lord Islington pointed out that this question was dealt with in a Memorandum recently prepared by General Sir Herbert Cox on a telegram from India reviewing the general military situation.

It was decided—

That General Cox's Memorandum (E.C.–182) should be circulated for consideration, and that, pending further discussion of the general situation, the instructions to the Meshed Mission should not be altered.

Next Meeting.

5. It was decided that the Committee should meet again on the following Wednesday or Thursday at 3 P.M. to consider a Memorandum by Sir Percy Cox, who would attend the meeting.

The choice of the day would depend on the time of circulation of the Memorandum.

It was also decided to postpone to the next meeting consideration of E.C.–161 and E.C.–162 concerning Firman Firma, E.C.–167 concerning Emir Feisal, and E.C.–168 concerning the Idrisi.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
April 22, 1918.

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APPENDIX.

British and Loyal Russian Troops in North-West Persia, 21st April, 1918.

Manjil (72 miles from Kasvin).—100 Russians with 2 machine-guns.

Kasvin (145 miles from Hamadan).—Lieut.-Colonel Clutterbuck with Bicharakof's force. Strength about 1,100 men with 3 field guns [?] and 1 mountain gun and 6 machine-guns. Some Ford cars with this party.

Hamadan (102 miles from Kermanshah).—Major-General Dunsterville with 31 officers and 15 other ranks of the B.M.M. 1 platoon Hampshires; 2 armoured cars and a few other cars; 1 aeroplane (arrived damaged 10th April, 1918). Wireless communication established with Kasr-i-Shirin.

Kermanshah (111 miles from Kasr-i-Shirin).—Lieut.-Colonel Kennion, Vice-Consul; Lieut.-Colonel Capper, Administrative Commandant. 1 platoon Hampshires with 2 Lewis guns and pack wireless; 2 armoured cars (have possibly moved up to Hamadan); [?] 1 squadron 14th Hussars and [?] 25 officers and 31 other ranks of B.M.M., left Harunsbud, 40 miles from Kermanshah, on 16th April, 1918.

Karind.—Small infantry post.

Surkhadiza.—Small infantry post.

Kasr-i-Shirin.—Colonel Bridge. 14th Hussars, less 1 squadron; 1 Battery R.H.A.; 2 mountain-guns; 1/4th Hampshires, less 2 platoons; 1 Light Armoured Motor Battery (less 2 cars). Wireless communication with Hamadan and Baghdad.

Kasr-i-Shirin: Sharoban area.—6th Cavalry Brigade (21st and 22nd Cavalry, 14th Hussars, and S Battery R.H.A.) less 1 Regiment (14th Hussars), and 1 Battery; 14th Division, less 1 battalion.

Heavy rain was falling on the 18th and 19th April on the road.

M.I.O. (*b*) *21st April*, 1918.

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SECRET.

E.C. 5th Minutes.

2

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, April 24, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The Right Hon. LORD ISLINGTON, G.C.M.G., D.S.O., Under-Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

The following were also present:

SIR THOMAS HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., India Office.

Major-General SIR P. COX, G.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Instructions to Sir C. Marling concerning Firman Firma.

1. THE Committee had before them two telegrams from Sir C. Marling (E.C.–161 and E.C.–162), the former dated the 27th February, 1918, the latter the 15th April, 1918. These telegrams were read by the chairman, who pointed out that it was not clear what kind of guarantees Firman Firma required, nor what contingency was contemplated. It could, no doubt, be inferred that the guarantee would be in the nature of an indemnity for loss attributable to his favourable attitude to us, and that the contingency might be the collapse of our cause in Persia.

In this connection, Mr. Oliphant pointed out that Firman Firma, though his Governorship was situated in South Persia, where a sudden crisis was unlikely, owned very considerable villages and other property in the north, especially in the neighbourhood of Teheran. He doubtless contemplated a situation jeopardising this

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property and looked to us for compensation should his pro-British policy entail the loss of his wealth.

It was decided—

That the Foreign Office should ask Sir C. Marling to define the guarantees that he considered fitting and the contingencies which they should be made to suit.

British Decoration to Emir Feisal.

2. The Committee considered E.C.–167, a telegram of the 19th April from General Clayton asking for a decision on the question of a British decoration for Emir Feisal.

Sir Mark Sykes observed that the honour should be an important one, but that the emblem should not contain a cross.

It was decided—

To leave the selection of the decoration to the Foreign Office.

Subsidy for the Idrisi.

3. With reference to Minute 2 of the 3rd Meeting, telegrams E.C.–168 and E.C.–176 from Sir R. Wingate were read. It appeared that the award of 10,000*l.* a month, without compensation for the past, as decided on by the Committee, was considered insufficient by the local authorities.

After some discussion, it was decided—

That the award of 10,000*l.* a month as previously fixed should be adhered to, but that a sum of 10,000*l.* should be granted in addition as arrears, and that this decision should be telegraphed by the Foreign Office to Sir R. Wingate.

(*Note.*—Treasury agree.)

Future of Mesopotamia.

4. The Committee considered a memorandum by Sir Percy Cox (E.C.–173) and a Minute on it by Sir Mark Sykes (E.C.–177).

Sir Percy Cox was present in person, and was congratulated by the Chairman on the very notable success of his administration.

The thanks of the Committee were also expressed to him for coming to put his experience at their disposal.

The Chairman began the discussion by an analysis of the situation.

Our policy might have to be adapted to certain formulæ, such as that of "self-determination," increasingly used as a watchword since President Wilson's entry into the war; there was also the Prime Minister's statement that the status of Mesopotamia among other countries would be settled at the Peace Conference. This last, however, was qualified by the assurance that it could never be allowed to return to the "blasting rule of the Turk."

Two areas included under the term Mesopotamia must be distinguished, *i.e.*, (*a*) Basra town and the district immediately surrounding it; (*b*) the Vilayets of Basra and Bagdad.

In respect to the first, Lord Hardinge, as Viceroy, had gone to Basra after its capture, and, with the authority of the Government, had given its inhabitants a pledge that they would not again be subject to Turkish rule. Similar and even stronger assurances had been given to the Sheikhs of Koweit and Mohammerah. Sir Percy Cox had been given instructions, to guide his action, that Basra would remain British, although these had not been actually promulgated. The case of Basra, therefore, differed from the case of the rest of Iraq, where the population had not received explicit pledges of the same nature.

In regard to the larger area we had to contemplate shaping our policy to fit various possible results of the war: (*a*) complete victory

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of the enemy; (*b*) a result of such a nature that peace on terms might have to be negotiated with Turkey; (*c*) victory of the Allies.

The first of these it was not necessary to consider, for in that case we should not be in a position to retain or administer anything at all.

As to the second, Sir Percy Cox in his Memorandum had considered the question of recognising a nominal Turkish suzerainty, symbolised by the retention of a flag. As a last resort it might be possible to reconcile this with a sound administration of the country. The question of the flag could doubtless be settled, possibly on the analogy of the Soudan.

In the third case the Turks would disappear altogether, and we should construct a State with an "Arab Façade," ruled and administered under British guidance and controlled by a native Mohammedan, and, as far as possible, an Arab staff. How was such a State to be set up?

The choice of its titular head presented some difficulty, in view of the assurances given by Sir H. McMahon to King Hussein, assurances that were materially qualified at the time, but had never been entirely withdrawn. (See India Office Memorandum B. 281, circulated as E.C.–76.)

Sir P. Cox had pointed out that Malik Hussein carried no weight in Iraq, and suggested as titular head of the future State the Naquib of Bagdad, who might be denominated Sultan or Hakim. If, however, we were held to our pledge to the King of the Hejaz we might satisfy the latter with a subsidy, paid from the revenues of Iraq, by way of recognition of his spiritual primacy.

In such an administration the British Government would be represented, as contemplated in the scheme drawn up after the capture of Bagdad, by a High Commissioner resident at Bagdad, working with a small body or Cabinet of Ministers, say half native and half British, and assisted perhaps by an advisory body or council of a dozen prominent and representative natives. This was, of course, only a sketch of what might be done.

Such an administration, it appeared, could be evolved from the present conditions, on the lines laid down by Sir Percy Cox, without dislocation or any sudden reversal of established habits. Irrigation and education should be the main lines of progress. Nomadic tribes, even if untouched by these attractions, would find nothing to resent in such a system, if it left them generally alone, and only took toll of their flocks and herds when they entered the town markets on which they were dependent for trade.

In view of the political and commercial interests involved, and of the specific pledges that had been given to the people of Basra, who had been told that we should not leave, it might be desirable to keep Basra town and district entirely in British hands. This district would extend from Fao at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, 20 miles from Basra, to Gurmat Ali, where the Euphrates joined, 10 miles higher, or possibly Kurnah. This area contained a population of approximately 80,000, the vast majority being Arabs, the remainder Jews, Indians, Syrians, Christians, Sabeans, &c.

Lord Islington asked whether the establishment and development of civilised institutions would not be so costly as to necessitate a more burdensome taxation than the population was accustomed to under Turkish rule.

Sir Percy Cox replied that at the beginning loans would certainly be required, but that increased prosperity would rapidly repay the greater fiscal requirements of government.

With respect to the policy of the "Arab Façade," and its more or less specious inconsistency with the principle of "self-determination," Mr. Balfour expressed the belief that President Wilson did not seriously mean to apply his formula outside Europe. He meant that no "civilised" communities should remain under the heel of other "civilised" communities: as to politically inarticulate

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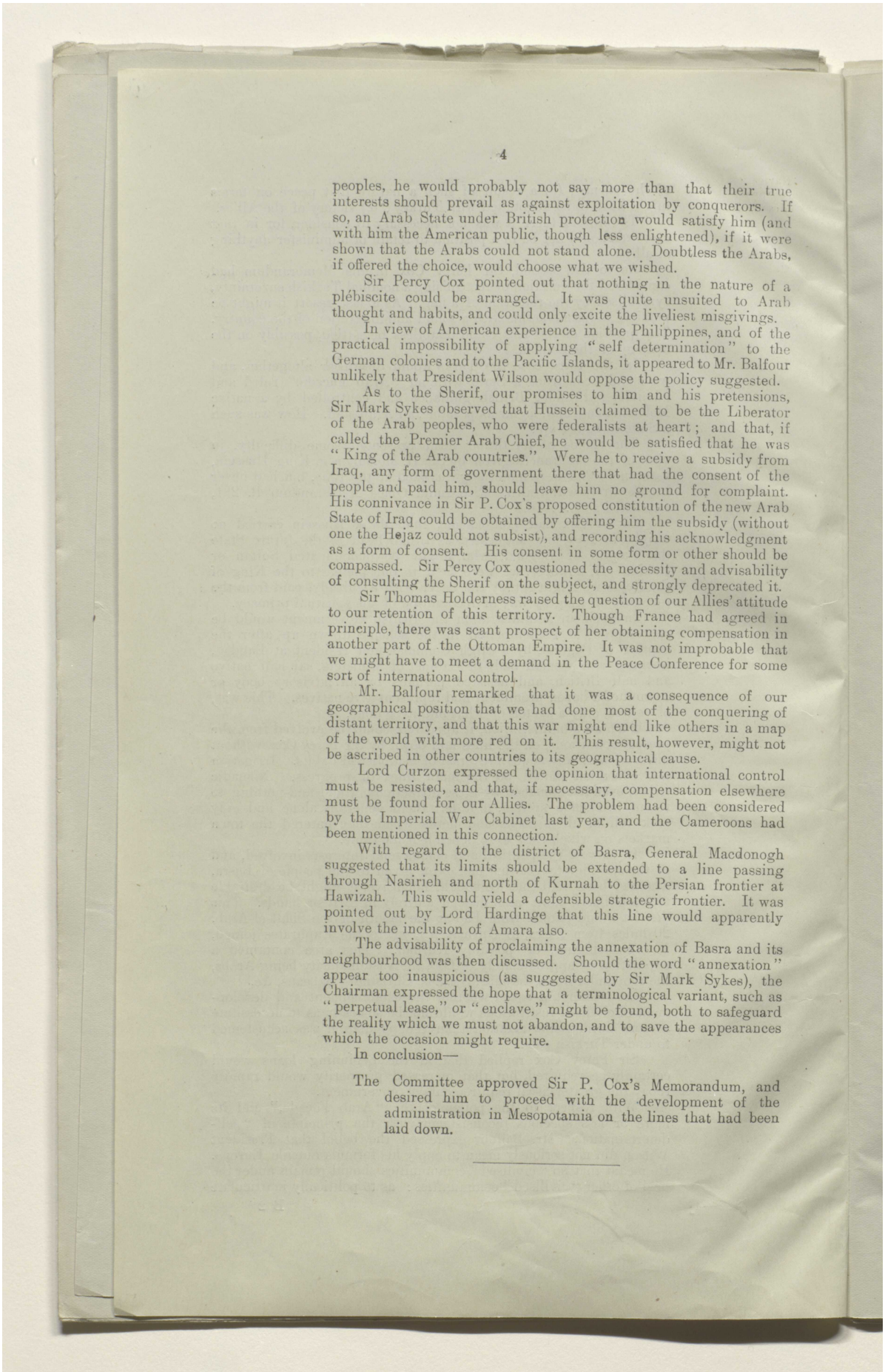

peoples, he would probably not say more than that their true interests should prevail as against exploitation by conquerors. If so, an Arab State under British protection would satisfy him (and with him the American public, though less enlightened), if it were shown that the Arabs could not stand alone. Doubtless the Arabs, if offered the choice, would choose what we wished.

Sir Percy Cox pointed out that nothing in the nature of a plébiscite could be arranged. It was quite unsuited to Arab thought and habits, and could only excite the liveliest misgivings.

In view of American experience in the Philippines, and of the practical impossibility of applying "self determination" to the German colonies and to the Pacific Islands, it appeared to Mr. Balfour unlikely that President Wilson would oppose the policy suggested.

As to the Sherif, our promises to him and his pretensions, Sir Mark Sykes observed that Hussein claimed to be the Liberator of the Arab peoples, who were federalists at heart; and that, if called the Premier Arab Chief, he would be satisfied that he was "King of the Arab countries." Were he to receive a subsidy from Iraq, any form of government there that had the consent of the people and paid him, should leave him no ground for complaint. His connivance in Sir P. Cox's proposed constitution of the new Arab State of Iraq could be obtained by offering him the subsidy (without one the Hejaz could not subsist), and recording his acknowledgment as a form of consent. His consent in some form or other should be compassed. Sir Percy Cox questioned the necessity and advisability of consulting the Sherif on the subject, and strongly deprecated it.

Sir Thomas Holderness raised the question of our Allies' attitude to our retention of this territory. Though France had agreed in principle, there was scant prospect of her obtaining compensation in another part of the Ottoman Empire. It was not improbable that we might have to meet a demand in the Peace Conference for some sort of international control.

Mr. Balfour remarked that it was a consequence of our geographical position that we had done most of the conquering of distant territory, and that this war might end like others in a map of the world with more red on it. This result, however, might not be ascribed in other countries to its geographical cause.

Lord Curzon expressed the opinion that international control must be resisted, and that, if necessary, compensation elsewhere must be found for our Allies. The problem had been considered by the Imperial War Cabinet last year, and the Cameroons had been mentioned in this connection.

With regard to the district of Basra, General Macdonogh suggested that its limits should be extended to a line passing through Nasirieh and north of Kurnah to the Persian frontier at Hawizah. This would yield a defensible strategic frontier. It was pointed out by Lord Hardinge that this line would apparently involve the inclusion of Amara also.

The advisability of proclaiming the annexation of Basra and its neighbourhood was then discussed. Should the word "annexation" appear too inauspicious (as suggested by Sir Mark Sykes), the Chairman expressed the hope that a terminological variant, such as "perpetual lease," or "enclave," might be found, both to safeguard the reality which we must not abandon, and to save the appearances which the occasion might require.

In conclusion—

The Committee approved Sir P. Cox's Memorandum, and desired him to proceed with the development of the administration in Mesopotamia on the lines that had been laid down.

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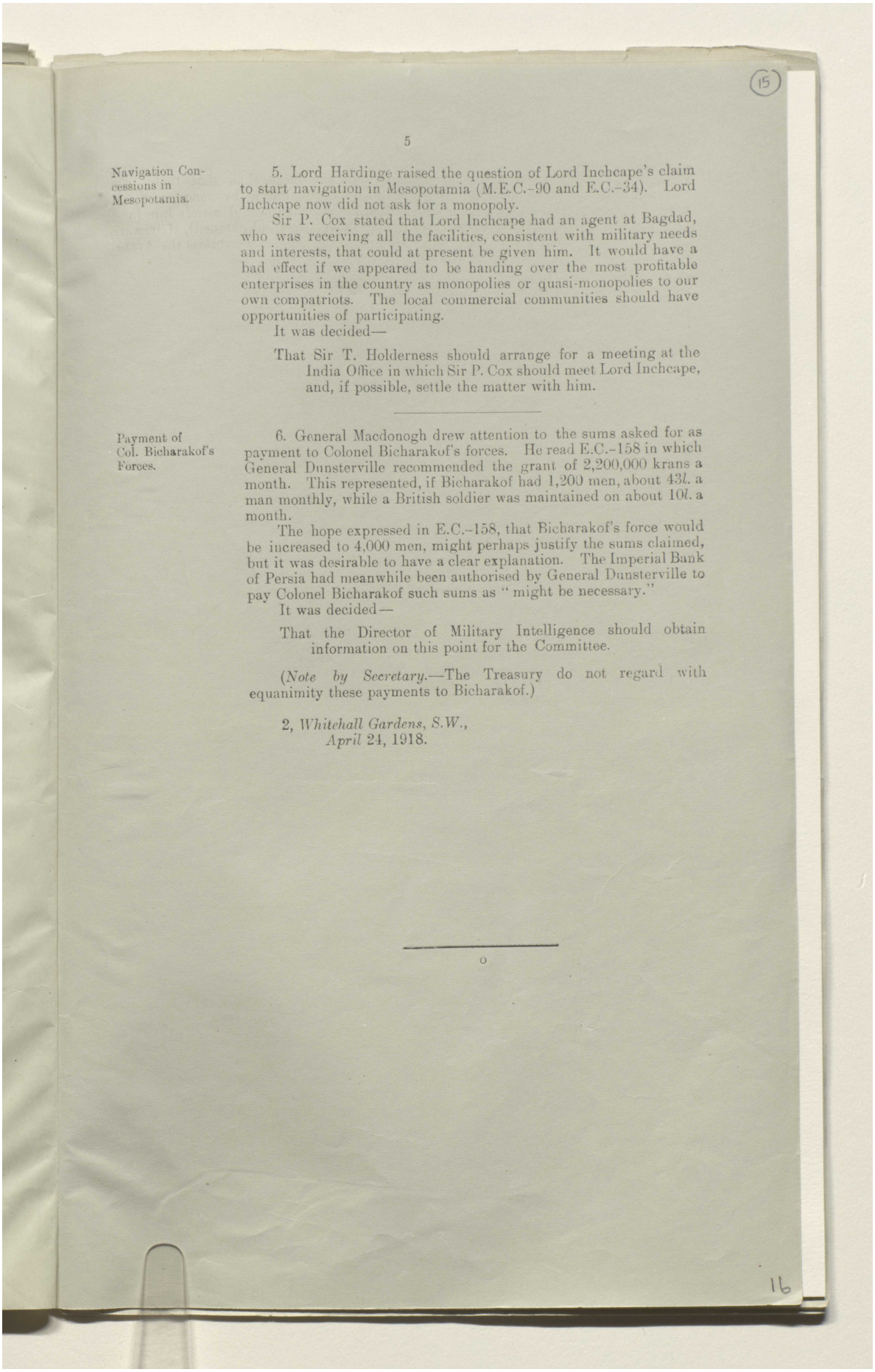

Navigation Concessions in Mesopotamia.

5. Lord Hardinge raised the question of Lord Inchcape's claim to start navigation in Mesopotamia (M.E.C.–90 and E.C.–34). Lord Inchcape now did not ask for a monopoly.

Sir P. Cox stated that Lord Inchcape had an agent at Bagdad, who was receiving all the facilities, consistent with military needs and interests, that could at present be given him. It would have a bad effect if we appeared to be handing over the most profitable enterprises in the country as monopolies or quasi-monopolies to our own compatriots. The local commercial communities should have opportunities of participating.

It was decided—

That Sir T. Holderness should arrange for a meeting at the India Office in which Sir P. Cox should meet Lord Inchcape, and, if possible, settle the matter with him.

Payment of Col. Bicharakof's Forces.

6. General Macdonogh drew attention to the sums asked for as payment to Colonel Bicharakof's forces. He read E.C.–158 in which General Dunsterville recommended the grant of 2,200,000 krans a month. This represented, if Bicharakof had 1,200 men, about 43*l.* a man monthly, while a British soldier was maintained on about 10*l.* a month.

The hope expressed in E.C.–158, that Bicharakof's force would be increased to 4,000 men, might perhaps justify the sums claimed, but it was desirable to have a clear explanation. The Imperial Bank of Persia had meanwhile been authorised by General Dunsterville to pay Colonel Bicharakof such sums as "might be necessary."

It was decided—

That the Director of Military Intelligence should obtain information on this point for the Committee.

(*Note by Secretary.*—The Treasury do not regard with equanimity these payments to Bicharakof.)

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
April 24, 1918.

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Lord Curzon. (16)

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E.C. 6th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, May 3, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Lieut.-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

SIR THOMAS W. HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., representing the Secretary of State for India.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Also present:

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., India Office.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Central Asian Situation.

1. THE Committee had before them E.C.–202, an appreciation of the Central Asian situation by the Viceroy.

The Chairman stated that it would be advisable that consideration of this document should be postponed until the Government of India's military proposals for the defence of India, circulated to the War Cabinet with a covering memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff as G.T.–4401, could be placed before the Committee. The Committee would then be able to deal with the situation as a whole.

General Macdonogh on behalf of the War Office, and Sir T. Holderness on behalf of the India Office, having expressed their assent, the Secretary was directed to circulate the paper in question, as well as connected memoranda by General Sir H. Cox, in time for a special meeting on the following Monday.

Scope and Purpose of Meshed Mission.

2. With reference to Minute 4 of the 4th Meeting, the Committee considered a Memorandum by Sir H. Cox on the subject of the scope and purpose of the Meshed Mission (E.C.–182).

It was pointed out that the present whereabouts of the Mission

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were unknown, and that it would probably take some weeks to reach its destination. Under these circumstances it was perhaps premature to issue any instructions.

It was decided—

That the India Office should ascertain whether the Mission had started, and what was the probable date of its arrival at Meshed.

It was pointed out by General Cox that the instructions to the Mission as they now stood (E.C.–131) might preclude it from improving any occasion that might arise of securing the co-operation of any forces disposed to help us against disturbing elements.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office strongly supported General Cox's views. To deny the use of the Trans-Caspian Railway to the enemy was our main objective. This could be effected from Meshed by gaining the friendship of tribes situated along the line.

The Chairman observed that any action to this end from Meshed should have a northerly rather than an easterly direction, to avoid arousing the suspicions of the Amir of Afghanistan.

It was decided—

That the India Office should inform the Government of India, and the Foreign Office Sir C. Marling, of the views held by the military authorities here as to the principal object which the Meshed Mission should keep in view, and that comments from both should be invited, and in due course communicated to the Committee.

In this connection, General Macdonogh informed the Committee that two companies of Indian troops detached from the Seistan force had moved to Meshed. They were being replaced, and the Seistan force would be about two battalions strong.

Extension of Nushki Railway.

3. A telegram from the Viceroy (E.C.–201) advocating the extension of the Nushki Railway beyond Mirjawa into Persia was discussed.

The figure of speech, "a camel at Hamadan" and "a gnat in Seistan," was criticised as fallacious. The "camel at Hamadan," consisting of a few men, horses, and baggage, was a removable offence; the "gnat," *i.e.*, a railroad, would be lasting.

General Macdonogh expressed strong dissent from the strategical conception underlying the Government of India's proposals, and quoted an opinion of the late Chief of the Imperial General Staff, adverse to the extension of operations for the defence of India into Eastern Persia. India would not be able to furnish enough troops to guard the very long lines of communication and at the same time to maintain an adequate striking force at its extremity.

There was general agreement that the Nushki Railway should be continued to Mirjawa, which, at the estimated rate of 1 mile a day, would be reached in about a month, and that it should not at present be extended further, and certainly, in existing circumstances, not into Persian territory.

It was decided—

That the India Office should inform the Government of India of the Committee's dissent from any further extension.

General Dunsterville's Mission.

4. A telegram from the military attaché at Tehran (E.C.–206) was read. It appeared that the Armenians invited General Dunsterville to come to Baku viâ Enzeli with two armoured cars.

General Macdonogh thought it inadvisable to accept the invitation.

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A better alternative would be to press Bicharakof to go to Enzeli and, with the Caspian fleet in view, to ask General Marshall to send to General Dunsterville naval ratings from the Tigris for employment in the Caspian when Enzeli was in friendly hands.

It was decided—

That the War Office should send instructions in this sense.

In this connection, the Director of Military Intelligence read a telegram he had just received from General Marshall concerning demands made by Colonel Bicharakof for 5,000,000 krans at once, and an equal sum after he had disposed of the Jangalis, or 10,000,000 krans to betake himself to the Caucasus. General Marshall recommended the initial 5,000,000.

After discussion concerning the fitness and cogency of submitting to manifest blackmail, it was decided—

That Sir C. Marling should be consulted by the Foreign Office, and that, pending his advice, a decision should be deferred.

Navigation Concession in Mesopotamia.

5. With reference to Minute 5 of the 5th Meeting, Sir T. Holderness reported that a conference had been held at the India Office, attended by Sir P. Cox and Lord Inchcape. Lord Inchcape had made it clear that he asked for nothing in the shape of a monopoly, but had urged that the firm of MacKay, Lynch, and Co., as registered before the war, should be allowed to open business at once at Baghdad. Sir P. Cox had concurred, subject to the approval of the military authorities in Mesopotamia; he had pointed out, however, that Messrs. Lynch's firm were already doing business at Baghdad in their individual capacity, and he asked whether their assent had been obtained to the proposed resuscitation of their joint Company (MacKay, Lynch, and Co.) which had been in abeyance since the outbreak of the war. Lord Inchcape undertook to approach Messrs. Lynch at once, and to communicate the result to the India Office.

[N.B.—A joint application has since been received, signed by Lord Inchcape and Mr. J. F. Lynch, seeking permission for the firm of MacKay, Lynch, and Co., to open at Baghdad.]

American Relief Mission to Persia.

6. The Chairman drew attention to E.C.–217, a telegram from Lord Reading intimating that the United States Government, which had been asked by the Persian Government for a loan of 2,000,000 dollars, had decided to make a free gift of this sum, and had apparently the intention of entrusting its distribution to missionaries.

Mr. Oliphant said that this telegram was a "bolt from the blue." An American Relief Mission had been suggested before and deprecated by us on Sir C. Marling's advice, but nothing had led us to expect this development.

It was proposed to ask Sir C. Marling to try and influence the distribution in the most appropriate manner.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
May 3, 1918.

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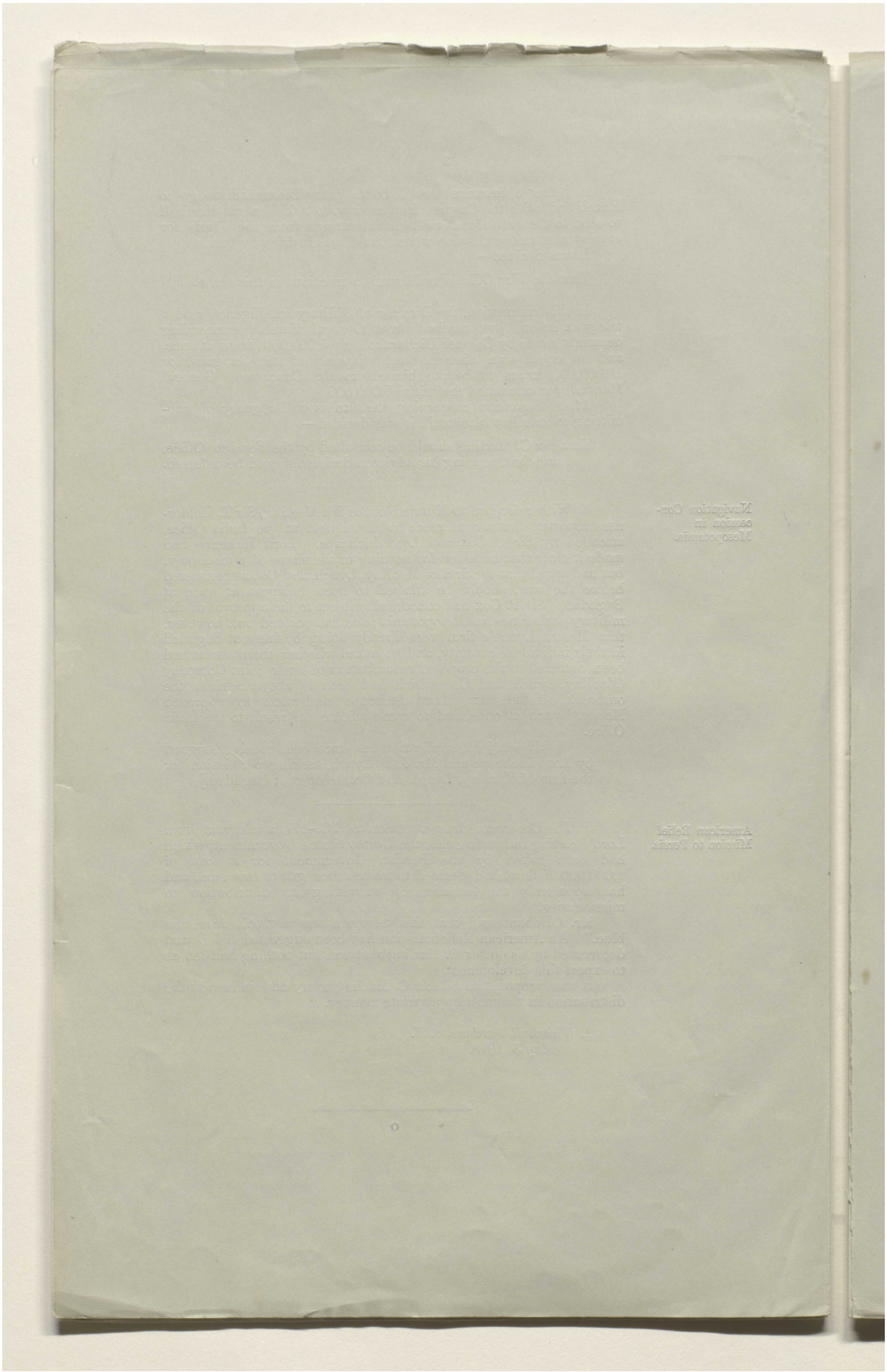

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E.C. 7th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, May 6, 1918, at 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

SIR THOMAS HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., representing the Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Also present:

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., India Office.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Central Asian Situation.

Defence of India.

1. The Committee considered an appreciation by the Viceroy on the situation in Central Asia (E.C. 202), certain military proposals for the defence of India with a covering memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff included in G.T.-4401, and comments on the proposals by the Military Secretary to the India Office (E.C. 210 and E.C. 222).

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that the minimum additional formations required by the Commander-in-Chief in India, *i.e.*, three infantry brigades to complete the troops allotted to the Khyber area, were not disputed, and that the further demands were now, though perhaps reluctantly, waived by the authorities in India, *vide* Commander-in-Chief's telegram No. 31837 of the 23rd April to War Office.

The hope entertained as a result of the Conference at Delhi of recruiting up to 500,000 men in India by next April, would, if realised, place the Commander-in-Chief in India in a strong position as regards Indian fighting man-power by that time. It is generally agreed that no serious attack can be made on India by a Turco-German combination before next spring. No very controversial point, therefore, appeared to remain.

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The usual European element, *i.e.*, one battalion to a brigade, was not easy to find. In this connection the suggestion made in Sir H. V. Cox's memorandum (E.C. 222, last paragraph), that a Gurkha battalion should take the place of a British one, might be commended to the Government of India. By this means the breaking up of the 13th Division could be avoided.

The Committee agreed with the estimate of the danger to India formed by the General Staff and Sir H. V. Cox, and it was understood that the War Office would communicate to the military authorities in India the directions and suggestions contained in the War Office and India Office memoranda above mentioned.

Bicharakof.

2. With reference to Minute 4 of the 6th Meeting, the Chairman read a telegram from Sir C. Marling (No. 302) in answer to the Committee's request for his advice. After discussion it was concluded that the best course was to furnish Bicharakof with enough money to keep his force in Persia, until we were able to dispense with it, and not enough to enable him to embark on larger ventures in the Caucasus or in Russia.

It was understood that the War Office and the Treasury were engaged in negotiations as to the scale of payment justifiable, with the object of keeping his force employed on our side in Persia. General Dunsterville had been asked to give details of Bicharakof's expenditure.

It was agreed—

That General Macdonogh would raise the question again at a later date.

General Appreciation of the Attitude of the Persian Government.

3. Attention was drawn by the chairman to the absence of a general appreciation by Sir C. Marling of the attitude of the Persian Government to our policy. For instance, we had no information enabling us to formulate answers to such concrete questions as, *e.g.*, Are the provincial governors, who are all-important in Persia, instructed to resist the advance of our forces or to acquiesce? What is the attitude of the Persian Government towards the Jangali movement and enemy activity in general? Is the position of the Persian Government *vis-à-vis* of our recent action one of sullen resignation, or is it openly hostile? Or does the possible appointment of an Anglophil Premier, hinted at by Sir C. Marling, indicate a pro-*Entente* policy? Are we in fact regarded as the friends or the enemies of the Persian people?

General Smuts drew attention to a Persian denunciation of the 1907 agreement between Great Britain and Russia, reported by Sir W. Townley from The Hague and mentioned by the press. If it had not been denounced to us, why had it been denounced in Holland?

The chairman pointed out that the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was an agreement between the British and Russian Governments, and that it was not, therefore, open to the Persian Government to denounce it. Further, on behalf of the British Government he had stated in the House of Lords that we regarded the agreement as in suspense, and were prepared, as soon as there was a responsible Russian Government in existence, to reconsider it. There was, therefore, no need for any new declaration on the point.

Mr. Balfour agreed that it was not easy to answer such questions, and undertook to obtain a survey of the situation from Sir C. Marling which would furnish the Committee with the desired information.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
May 7, 1918.

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4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, May 10, 1918, at 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

SIR THOMAS W. HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., representing the Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Also attended:

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Secretary*.

Instructions to General Dunsterville.

1. The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir C. Marling, dated the 7th May (E.C.–264).

The Chairman explained that General Dunsterville proposed to send a party of British officers and men to Tabriz, and that this course was deprecated by Sir C. Marling on the ground that it would prove disadvantageous to the Nestorian Christians, whom we wished to help. The question for the Committee to decide, therefore, was whether this expedition should proceed, in spite of Sir C. Marling's views, or whether it should be countermanded.

General Macdonogh, in reply to a question by the Chairman, stated that General Dunsterville had not initiated action on his own account, but that the expedition had been suggested by Sir C. Marling himself.

The Director of Military Intelligence then related in sequence correspondence that had taken place between himself and Lord Hardinge, between the War Office and the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, and between Sir C. Marling and the Foreign Office. It appeared that as late as 2nd May Sir C. Marling had held the opinion that European officers should be sent among Nestorian

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Christians (E.C.–229). He had never before suggested that the arrival of British officers could be detrimental to them. His suggestion that the expedition would furnish a pretext to the Turks to massacre Christians indiscriminately was a strange one, for the Turks would need no pretext, and the best protection to the Christians was to keep the Turks at a distance. As to the risk the small party General Dunsterville proposed to send might run, there was evidence that the Turks had been sending small parties into Persia. If small parties of Turks could move, it was likely that small parties of British would have equal liberty of movement, especially since the defeat of the Sinjabis, of the Turks by the Jelus (E.C.–228), and our own success at Kerkuk. The War Office was therefore of opinion that the expedition should proceed.

Mr. Oliphant read out a telegram just received from Sir C. Marling, No. 394, in which he stated that the Persian Government was seriously alarmed by the advance of Turkish troops in Azerbaijan, and hinted that this alarm might, with encouragement, lead to a rupture of relations, or even a state of war, between Persia and Turkey, should His Majesty's Government not "still adhere to the policy of keeping Persia out of the war."

It was pointed out that His Majesty's Government had always preferred Persian neutrality to Persia's alliance with our enemies, but had never yet had to choose between Persian neutrality and Persia's active opposition to our enemies. This alternative there was no reason to reject. Even if Persia's belligerency against the Turks presented possible disadvantages for us, a rupture of relations between the two was unobjectionable.

In reply to an enquiry from the Chairman, Mr. Oliphant expressed the view that if Persia were to break off relations it would be of considerable moral benefit to us, even though of little material use.

Mr. Shuckburgh concurred in this opinion.

It was decided therefore—

That Sir C. Marling should be informed by the Foreign Office that these were the views of His Majesty's Government.

The question was then asked whether the sending of British officers among the Nestorians without the expressed consent of the Persian Government would further or hamper the policy of getting Persia on our side.

Mr. Oliphant was of opinion that it might delay matters; the present Persian Cabinet was not altogether satisfactory; we should have to explain our action, and the Persians might seize on it as a pretext for hesitation.

The Chairman said that there were three courses open to us:—

1. To decide with Sir C. Marling to stop the expedition.
2. To let the expedition proceed, and to inform Sir C. Marling of our reasons for doing so.
3. To telegraph to him that we proposed to authorise the expedition, but would like to know that it would not have an unfavourable effect on the larger issue.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that from his point of view it was desirable that the expedition should start at once. Sir C. Marling had expressed very strong views on the subject, and he was not likely to alter; as to breaking with Turkey, it was not likely that the Persians would make up their minds to take such a step for months.

Lord Hardinge expressed the view that if the expedition was to proceed it was best to take all responsibility for it from Sir C. Marling.

The Foreign Office and the India Office, having expressed their concurrence with the War Office on the subject, it was decided—

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That the War Office should telegraph to General Dunsterville to proceed, and that the Foreign Office should telegraph to Sir C. Marling that His Majesty's Government adopted the policy he had previously advocated, and requested him to explain to the Persian Government that the purpose of the expedition was to protect Persian subjects against Turkish troops attacking Azerbaijan.

Payment of Bicharakof's Troops.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence raised the question of payments to Colonel Bicharakof's troops, and suggested that General Dunsterville should have instructions to continue these payments, as need arose, until the question had been definitely settled.

Mr. Keynes, on behalf of the Treasury, stipulated that the rate should not exceed 2,200,000 krans per month. This rate had not been acquiesced in as yet by the Treasury, but it appeared that double was now being asked by Bicharakof. This proviso was accepted, and it was decided—

That the War Office should instruct General Dunsterville accordingly.

Question of Allowance to Firman Firma.

3. The Committee had before them a telegram from Sir C. Marling (E.C.-239) on the subject of an allowance to Firman Firma.

It was decided—

That as the contingency referred to in this telegram had not yet arisen, consideration of the question should be deferred, and no promises made to Firman Firma or his family, and that the Foreign Office should inform Sir C. Marling accordingly.

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4. With reference to the Hejazi Mission from Sherif Hussein to Turkestan (E.C.-224, E.C.-225, and E.C.-226), Sir Mark Sykes undertook to discover whether the emissaries were Arabs or Turkomans.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
May 10, 1918.

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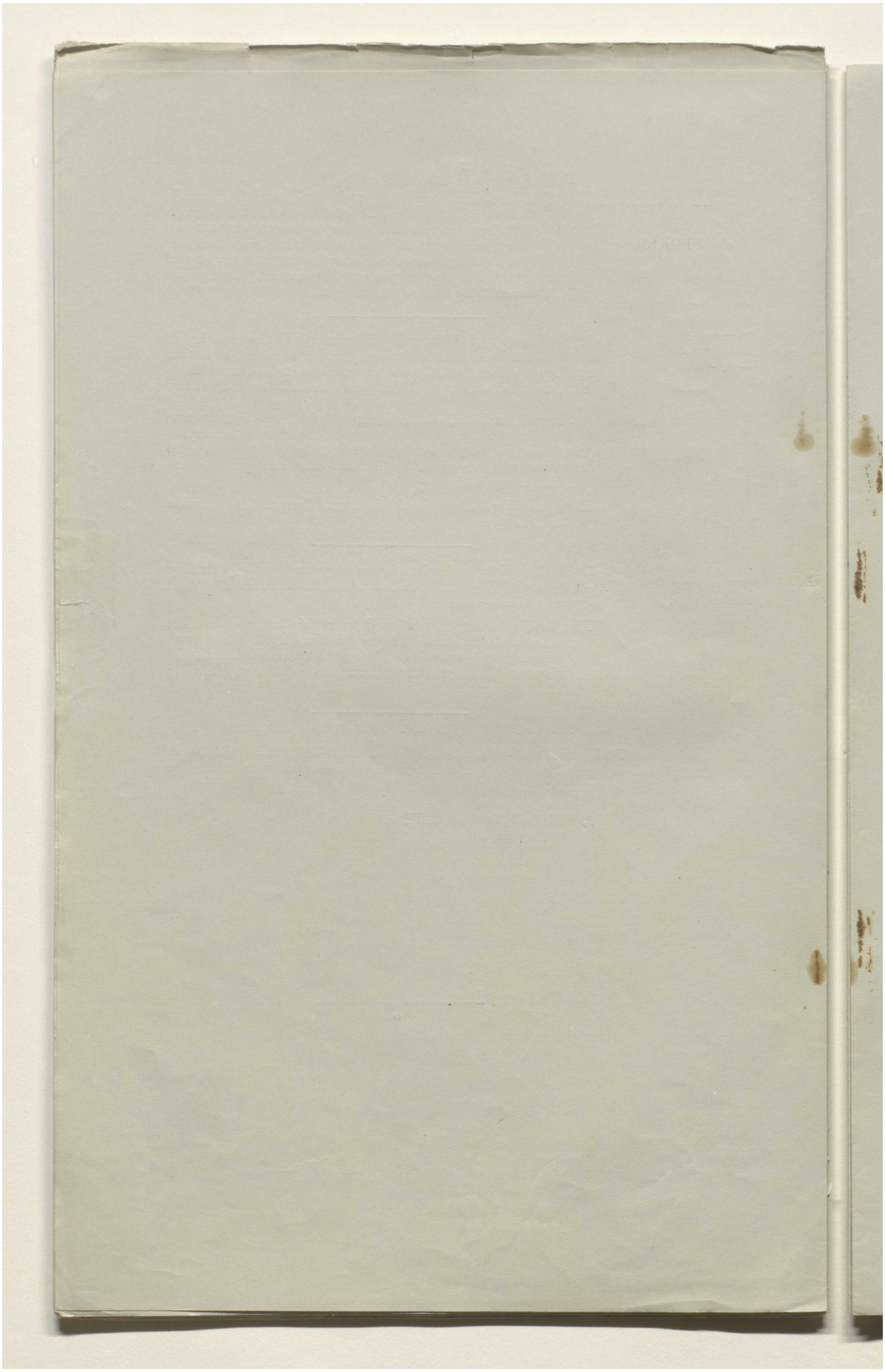

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Lord Curzon

(21)

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SECRET.

E.C. 9th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, May 21, 1918, at 6 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Also present:

Mr. DUDLEY WARD, *Treasury*.

Position of British Forces in North-West Persia.

TELEGRAMS Nos. 422 and 423 from Sir C. Marling were read, indicating his disappointment as to the paucity of the British troops and the slowness of their arrival upon the Kermanshah–Kazvin line, and emphasising the degree to which a successful Allied policy in Persia is dependent upon the presence of adequate military force.

General Macdonogh read to the Committee a statement of the present position of our forces in North-West Persia. (Appendix.)

He stated that General Marshall's operations in the direction of Kerkuk had now come to a standstill. He thought, therefore, that the General Officer Commanding, who appeared to be inclined not to attach adequate importance to the operations in Persia, should be definitely instructed to push on as much as possible. According to information at hand, the General had adequate supplies for the above-mentioned force, and it was hoped that our men might in a month's time be stretched along the road to Kazvin.

Lord Curzon expressed surprise that the very definite views of

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the Committee had not yet been fully grasped by General Marshall.
It was decided—

That the War Office should send to General Marshall a strong telegram reiterating the importance attached by the Committee to the operations in Persia, and that Sir C. Marling should be informed thereof.

General Dunsterville.

Lord R. Cecil called attention to the hope expressed by Sir C. Marling in his telegram No. 422 of the 18th May, that General Dunsterville's requirements might be met. He also thought it desirable to enquire direct from this officer what his needs were and what progress he was making with local levies.
The Committee decided —

That the Director of Military Intelligence should send a telegram accordingly, and that Sir C. Marling be informed.

Persian Cossack Division.

On Sir C. Marling's telegrams Nos. 412 and 426 of the 14th and 19th May respectively, Lord R. Cecil suggested that, in view of the unreliability of the Russian officers, it was time to consider whether they should not be replaced by British or American officers.
The Director of Military Intelligence also was of opinion that the Russian officers might fail us at a critical moment.
It was pointed out that some weeks ago the matter was referred to Sir C. Marling, who held that the scheme to impose foreign officers other than Russian could not possibly be made acceptable to the then Persian Cabinet.
After general discussion as to the eventual reduction of the division to the status of a brigade, Lord Curzon pointed out that it was essential to pay the Cossacks as requested in Sir C. Marling's telegram No. 412, as there was no alternative. General Smuts held the same view.
It was decided to act accordingly, and to instruct Sir C. Marling to bear in mind, for use at a suitable opportunity, the desirability of securing the substitution of British for Russian officers in the Cossack division or brigade, but that it was desirable to wait until a friendly Government was actually in the saddle.

Vossugh-ed-Dowleh.

Lord Curzon reminded the Committee, with regard to Sir C. Marling's telegram No. 423 of the 18th May, that for months past our desire had been to secure the return to power of Vossugh-ed-Dowleh. The Foreign Office and India Office stated that the present proposals of Sir C. Marling did not exceed the amounts agreed to by the Committee in March last (telegram No. 132 of the 7th March to Sir C. Marling), and in these circumstances
It was decided—

That Sir C. Marling should be authorised to take the action he suggested, in so far as the Treasury and India Office might be in a position to find the necessary funds.

South Persia Rifles.

Sir C. Marling's telegram No. 429 of the 20th May having been read, Sir G. Macdonogh explained the recent operations by the South Persia Rifles. He added that these measures may have been undertaken to improve the *moral* of the force, which had of late been bad.
No action was called for.
The proceedings of Soulet, referred to in the Persian telegrams, did not seem to be more than a normal symptom of local disorder.

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Hejaz and Meshed Missions.

Lord Curzon desired that at the next meeting of the Committee the question of the Meshed Mission and of the King of Mecca's representatives should be considered.

Railway near East Persia Frontier.

The Committee saw no objection to a proposal of the Government of India that preliminary reconnaissance should be made in connection with the Mirjawa line.

Foreign Office,
May 21, 1918.

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APPENDIX.

British and Loyal Russian Troops in North-West Persia, May 21, 1918.

Manjil (72 miles from Kazvin)—
One hundred Russians with 2 machine-guns.

Kazvin (145 miles from Hamadan)—
Lieutenant-Colonel Clutterbuck with Bicharakov's force: strength about 1,100 men, with 3 field guns, 1 mountain gun, 6 machine-guns, a few Ford cars, and 2 armoured cars.

Sultanabad (6 miles south-west of Kazvin)—
One squadron 14th Hussars (arrived 7th May).

Hamadan (102 miles from Kermanshah)—
Major-General Dunsterville with 95 officers and 210* other ranks of B.M.M., 11 Russian officers, 3 pack wireless sets, 1 platoon Hampshires, 3 armoured and a few other cars (8 touring and 34 Ford cars distributed between Kazvin and Hamadan), and 1 aeroplane (?). Wireless communication with Kasr-i-Shirin.

Kermanshah (111 miles from Kasr-i-Shirin)—
Lieutenant-Colonel Kennion, Vice-Consul; Lieutenant-Colonel Capper, Administrative Commandant; 5 platoons British infantry with 2 Lewis guns, pack and waggon wireless, and 2 armoured cars.

En route—
2 platoons British infantry with a section of field ambulance.

Karind (53 miles from Kasr-i-Shirin)—
Small infantry post.

Surkhadiza (37 miles from Kasr-i-Shirin)—
Small infantry post.

Kasr-i-Shirin—
Colonel Bridge, †14th Hussars, less 1 squadron, †1 battery R.H.A. (?), 2 mountain guns, 1 British infantry brigade, less half battalion, and †1 armoured car battery, less 5 cars. Wireless communication with Hamadan and Baghdad.

General Staff, War Office,
May 21, 1918.

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* Of these, 39 officers and 164 other ranks left Kermanshah on the 12th May and should have arrived on the 19th. Fifteen officers and 40 other ranks are shortly leaving for Zinjan.
† Some of these are possibly employed on the Kerkuk operations.

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Lord Curzon. (23)

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E.C. 10th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, May 28, 1918, at 3·15 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J.C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Also attended:

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Mr. H. W. KENNARD, Foreign Office.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Circulation of Papers.

1. The Chairman said that telegrams and papers for consideration by the Committee emanated from three Departments: the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the War Office. These papers had hitherto been circulated to members in one file, and had not been arranged by subjects, but merely in chronological order. He proposed that in future all papers, before circulation, should as far as possible be grouped together in accordance with their subject headings for convenience of reference. Some difficulty arose from the fact that frequently a flood of important telegrams was received during the twenty-four hours immediataly preceding a meeting. He trusted that the new procedure would succeed in coping with these drawbacks, and hoped that the Departments concerned would send to

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the Secretary, with the least possible delay, all important papers as soon as they arrived, and especially those which were received the day before the meeting or on the morning of the day the meeting was held.

Situation in South Persia.

2. The Chairman gave the following résumé of the situation :—

Early in May, Sir Percy Sykes, who had under his command over 5,000 men of the South Persia Rifles, many of them of doubtful loyalty, was engaged in minor operations against certain troublesome tribes. Desertions were reported among the members of this force, and attempts had been made to tamper with their allegiance. Next, the Kashgai, who were a formidable tribal aggregation, had attacked Khaneh Zinian, a walled enclosure recently strengthened, some 30 miles west of Shiraz on the Bushire–Shiraz road. Sir Percy Sykes had also under his command over 1,200 Indian regular troops. He had sent a force of about 1,000 men, with guns, to deal with the tribes who started the disturbance and his operations had been successful. A new phenomenon had then appeared in the person of Soulet, the head of the Kashgai tribe, who had proclaimed a Jihad and invested Khaneh Zinian. Firman Firmah was standing by us, and so, for the present, was the Kawam, who was the head of a powerful family in the Shiraz district, but the latter could not be implicitly relied on. The situation required prompt and effective handling, and last Saturday His Majesty's Government had been asked whether Sir Percy Sykes should be given a free hand to deal with it. There had been no time to refer the matter to the Eastern Committee, and Lord Robert Cecil, who was acting as Foreign Secretary, had telegraphed giving the required authority to Sykes. This, the Chairman thought, was a wise decision. Then, late on Sunday evening, news had been received that the garrison of Khaneh Zinian had murdered Captain Will and Sergeant Coomber and had deserted, with their rifles and ammunition, to the Kashgais. Telegraph lines had been cut and the whole country was up. Sir Charles Marling had pointed out that this situation had arisen at a most inopportune time. We were faced with a conflagration in South Persia just when we were concentrating in the North. Marling himself would have liked to negotiate, but this was impossible.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that the *moral* of the South Persia Rifles was suspect; that as a disciplinary measure Sir Percy Sykes took many of them out against the tribes in the neighbourhood of Shiraz; that as a consequence the Kashgais had given warning that they would not stand the action of foreign troops in this neighbourhood, and that therefore Sir Percy Sykes' action was the direct cause of this war.

General Macdonogh thought there was some misapprehension. Sir Percy Sykes, in undertaking this minor operation, was not unconscious of the opportunity which it might afford of improving the *moral* of the South Persia Rifles, but he was fully justified in his action on other grounds.

The Chairman, proceeding, stated that certain of the deserters had returned to Shiraz, some of whom Sir Percy Sykes would be bound to execute. The latter had naturally appealed for reinforcements and had especially asked for aeroplanes. A telegram dated the 27th May, from the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, stated that General Marshall was averse from any dissipation of the forces under his command in view of the fact that he had to extend his right flank to the Caspian. General Marshall also stated that it would take two infantry brigades, with such pack transport as might be available, three weeks to reach Basra. As regards the pack transport, 10,900 mules would be required for the two brigades, carrying fourteen days' supplies.

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As regards aeroplanes, the distance from Basra to Bushire was 250 miles, which was too great a distance for machines in view of the hot weather and the liability of engines to overheat; while, if they were sent, they would have to be packed and shipped from Baghdad. As General Marshall was unable to send either troops or transport, the Chairman enquired whether there was a possibility of reinforcements being found from other sources.

General Wilson said that some two or three months ago four companies of infantry and two sections of artillery had been sent to Bandar Abbas, while one additional squadron of cavalry was formed in Persia. Of the aforesaid troops, all except two companies were at Shiraz when the trouble occurred. The position of the remaining two companies was not known.

Mr. Montagu said that Sir Herbert Cox had mentioned a battalion being near Neriz, south of the lake of that name. There should also be 600 rifles ("Regulars") near Saidabad. He enquired whether these troops were yet under Sykes or were marching to join him.

General Macdonogh said that all troops landed at Bandar Abbas and all troops at Kerman came under the orders of Sir Percy Sykes.

Mr. Balfour thought the Committee might assume that Sir Percy Sykes was in real difficulties, and that he must be reinforced. The point was whether assistance should be sent to him from Mesopotamia or from India.

General Smuts doubted whether they might not be exaggerating his difficulties. Apart from the South Persia Rifles, Sykes had 1,600 Indian regular infantry, 200 mounted infantry, and a squadron of other mounted troops. These constituted a formidable force to oppose irregular tribesmen. Moreover, Sykes had defeated the tribes, and he, apparently, had made no definite request for any assistance except aeroplanes

The Chairman said that he was personally acquainted with the terrain between Bushire and Shiraz, which presented enormous difficulties, especially when the whole countryside was hostile. He thought that they must enquire at once from Sir Percy Sykes: (*a*) exactly what his military difficulties were; and (*b*) whether he needed reinforcements other than aeroplanes. He further thought it very desirable that the Committee should be in possession of a connected account of the circumstances which led to these disturbances in the south, and of the reasons for military action there.

General Macdonogh undertook to furnish, at an early date, a complete statement of the events which had led up to the present situation. He further stated that Sir Percy Sykes' operations had, as one of their principal objects, the maintenance of his communications with Bandar Abbas which was his base of supplies. As regards aeroplanes, the flight from Bushire to Shiraz would be 50 miles over the plains and 50 miles over hills. It would not be possible to establish an aerodrome in Shiraz, nor to get spare parts and petrol there.

The Chairman pointed out that apart from the question of heat affecting the aeroplanes, there were no starting or landing places in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Balfour suggested that Sir Percy Sykes should be told that it would be difficult to reinforce him, and it would take weeks for troops to reach him viâ Bushire.

Mr. Montagu referred to a statement by Sir Percy Cox that reinforcements via Bushire would have 170 miles to travel along a difficult road infested with hostile tribesmen; travelling viâ Bandar Abbas, on the other hand, they would have a better road but it was nearly twice as long.

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General Wilson undertook—

(1.) *To enquire from Sir Percy Sykes if the Bushire route was open and practicable;*

(2.) *To ascertain from Sykes exactly what reinforcements he needed;*

(3.) *To find out from India if reinforcements could be sent to Sykes from that country viâ Bushire.*

(At this point Mr. Balfour, Mr. Montagu, Lord R. Cecil, and General Wilson withdrew from the meeting.)

Caucasus.

General Dunsterville.

3. The Chairman said that a novel situation had arisen as regards General Dunsterville. The Committee's policy had been to try and build up the Kerman–Hamadan–Kasvin line. They had pointed out the importance of this theatre to General Marshall, whose reply had not been entirely satisfactory, in the view of the Committee and the War Office. Then, at this stage, General Dunsterville telegraphed on the 24th May through the G.O.C. Mesopotamia the surprising news that Bicharakof was moving North to the Caspian and that General Dunsterville proposed to accompany him in order to try and carry out his own plans in the Caucasus. Sir Charles Marling had pointed out what a dislocation of our general policy this departure involved. The Chairman said that, after consultation with Lord Hardinge and General Macdonogh, he had authorised the latter to draw General Marshall's attention to the fact that this new departure meant a complete reversal of our policy. General Marshall, in his reply, explained: (*a*) that the mission was a very small one; (*b*) that in authorising it to proceed he was only carrying out the instructions of His Majesty's Government at the end of March, that the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, should bear in mind the possibilities of the Caucasus. Since then, however, the Chairman pointed out, the situation had changed and, naturally, former suggestions had gone by the board. The Chairman assumed that the Committee still adhered to their policy of concentrating all our energies on the line Kerman–Hamadan–Kasvin. He confessed his surprise at the proposal that Bicharakof should be allowed to go and leave the line from Kerman to Kasvin open and to let General Dunsterville—the only man who could possibly fill up the gap—go with him.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office had received no hint of General Dunsterville's proposed move. Dunsterville had intended to make a tour about the middle of the month and had suddenly wired that he wished to take with him a squadron of the 14th Hussars and a Company of the Hampshire Regiment to Baku, but General Marshall had refused to give him the troops. General Dunsterville had also communicated his intentions to Sir Charles Marling, who was impressed with the importance of holding Kasvin even at the risk of reducing the forces at Hamadan. The War Office had then wired to Mesopotamia to the effect that the British Government had decided that General Dunsterville should on no account be allowed to proceed to the Caucasus.

The Chairman thought that these orders were absolutely sound. Now that General Dunsterville had been stopped there was nothing further to be done for the present. *He would ask the Foreign Office, however, to communicate the views of the Committee to Sir Charles Marling.*

General Macdonogh referred to a telegram from General Marshall dated the 27th May, outlining a scheme to maintain a mobile motor column to keep the Kerman–Kasvin line open. Colonel Rowlandson had said that, in his opinion, 5,000 troops could easily be supplied in Hamadan.

General Smuts thought there was a good deal to be said for the establishment of such a force. The prospects of the approaching

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harvest in Persia were said to be very good. 1,000 infantry was not an adequate force to keep the line open, but 1,000 infantry in cars was equal to at least three or four times their number on foot, and he himself thought it was a good idea worth considering. The War Office, on the other hand, had wired to the effect that while fully appreciating the desirability of having a mobile force, they did not think that the scheme outlined by General Marshall was adequate.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office had not definitely turned the scheme down, and that the telegram referred to had been sent before General Marshall's explanation had been received. There were at present two cars in Kasvin and three in Hamadan, while a squadron of cars was already on the way between Kerman and Hamadan.

The Chairman thought that the Committee were now disposed to view the scheme with favour, and proposed they should give authority to the War Office to carry out the project.

(This was agreed to.)

Jangali Movement.

4. The Chairman said that the Committee had previously regarded the Jangalis as a troublesome but not too formidable people. They were now rumoured to be moving to the south-east corner of the Caspian towards Astrabad and the Turkoman country, Gumesh Tepe, &c. They were further reported to be on friendly terms with the Bolsheviks. Probably the Germans were behind this. Unfortunately we could take no measures to stop this movement, which marked, however, an ominous development of the situation. Some of the Jangalis were said to be at Damgan, and their intention was apparently to cut the main route between Meshed and Teheran.

General Macdonogh pointed out that there were a number of Hazaras in North-East Persia, and he wondered whether it would be possible to organise them against the Jangalis.

The Chairman thought that when our mission reached Meshed they might find plenty to do in Persia itself, without attempting to penetrate into Central Asia.

After some discussion—

General Macdonogh undertook to warn Major Redl of the Jangali movement eastwards, and to ask him if he thought it possible, with the aid of British officers or otherwise, to raise a force among the Hazaras of North-East Persia.

Lord Hardinge undertook, on behalf of the Foreign Office, to ascertain the view of Sir Charles Marling as to the practicability of such a scheme.

Propaganda in the Caucasus, Asia Minor, and Persia.

5. The Committee had before them a copy of a letter dated the 10th May, 1918, from the Secretary to the Minister of Information to Sir Mark Sykes, stating that it was understood that, in Sir Mark's view, propaganda in the Caucasus, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Persia could only be conducted by those who have made a life-long study of the questions connected with Oriental psychology and conditions, and thought it was better that the control of these matters should be retained by the Eastern Committee. The letter stated that Lord Beaverbrook was anxious to fall in with Sir Mark's wishes in this matter, but he understood that the Committee did not wish to deal with propaganda in Turkey in Europe and Bulgaria, which countries, for propaganda purposes, were under Lord Northcliffe. The letter went on to say that Lord Beaverbrook suggested that a liaison should be established between the Eastern Committee and the Ministry of Information, in order to ensure that

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co-operation and continuity of policy were maintained between the operations of the Ministry in Russia on the one hand, and the operations of the Eastern Committee in the Caucasus and Persia on the other.

General Macdonogh said that Sir William Tyrrell had pressed that Colonel Keyes' services should be utilised in this connection. He had accordingly sent Colonel Keyes to interview Lord Beaverbrook, the latter apparently welcoming the suggestion. General Macdonogh had written yesterday to ask Lord Beaverbrook to confirm in writing, what he understood was his wish, that Colonel Keyes should be utilised for propaganda purposes. Lord Beaverbrook's reply had not yet been received.

Sir Mark Sykes said he had seen Mr. Philips and Mr. Long, who worked with Lord Northcliffe, and also Mr. Pembroke Wicks. The proposal was not that the Eastern Committee should conduct propaganda in the countries named, but that they should control it. He thought there should be one controlling body, but that the executive should rest in the hands of Lord Northcliffe.

Mr. Schuckburgh pointed out that the Mesopotamia authorities were already in touch with Lord Beaverbrook's department. A proposal had been made, and had received the support of Sir Percy Cox, that an officer should be sent out by the Department to Mesopotamia to work under the Civil Commissioner.

Lord Hardinge considered that all the Committee could do was to endeavour to control propaganda in that quarter.

The Chairman thought that the Committee should inform Lord Beaverbrook that they could not undertake propaganda work, which was the function of the Ministry of Information. The Committee, however, would wish to be consulted and also to supervise any literature which the Ministry might send out. They would further like to advise as to the appointment of a liaison officer and to be kept informed generally of what was being done in the way of propaganda. He agreed with the Director of Military Intelligence that Colonel Keyes would be a good appointment.

Lord Hardinge said that the Foreign Office liaison officers with Lord Beaverbrook were Mr. Gaselee and Mr. Philips, respectively.

It was decided—

That Sir Mark Sykes should reply to the Secretary to the Minister of Information in the following sense:—

(a.) *The Eastern Committee could not itself undertake propaganda in the East;*

(b.) *Such propaganda should be conducted by the Ministry of Information in consultation with the Foreign Office and the India Office, who would refer to the Eastern Committee if advice or instructions were required.*

Persian Alliance.

6.—(1.) The Chairman said that the papers circulated were mainly for information. Sir Charles Marling had asked if His Majesty's Government would be prepared to enter into an alliance with the Persian Government against the Turks, should the latter Government suggest it. We had replied (E.C.-375) that if the alternative to a Persian alliance with Great Britain was a Persian alliance with Turkey and our enemies, we would certainly prefer the former. If, however, the alternative was continued neutrality, it seemed that comparatively little advantage would be gained by such an alliance. If, therefore, Vossugh-ed-Dowleh, in course of conversation, should suggest the idea of an alliance, Sir Charles Marling should not reject the proposal, but should endeavour to ascertain his exact meaning and what concessions he would require.

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Sir Charles Marling had replied that the military advantages of the alliance would be small but not negligible, while he submitted that the acquisition of an independent Moslem ally would have a far-reaching effect in Asia. We had since received a telegram from the Indian Government (E.C.–390) dated the 24th May, stating the pros and cons of such an alliance and appearing on the whole to advise against it.

It was decided—

That it was not necessary to issue further instructions at this stage.

Shah's Subsidy.

6.—(2.) Lord Hardinge referred to a telegram from Sir Charles Marling, dated the 26th May (E.C.–396) stating that the Shah was pressing for more money, and threatening not to appoint Vossugh-ed-Dowleh Prime Minister, unless his demands were met. The Shah was asking for 20,000 tomans a month during Vossugh's tenure of office, and a pension in case of exile. Sir Charles Marling said that he had given the Shah to understand that we would not submit to blackmail. He thought, however, that the Shah would be prepared to accept 15,000 tomans a month, and he asked for authority to grant this in case of absolute necessity.

It was decided—

That Sir Charles Marling should be authorised, in case of necessity, to grant the 15,000 *tomans a month.*

Financing of Baratof and Bicharakof.

7. The Committee had before them various papers dealing with the different financial obligations of His Majesty's Government in Persia, notably a memorandum by the War Office (E.C.–397) entitled "Financial Questions concerning Russian troops in Persia," which stated that decisions were required on the following points :—

(*a.*) Are the outstanding requisitions amounting to 8½ million krans, in connection with the evacuation of Baratof's troops, to be settled or not ?

(*b.*) Is Baratof to be credited with approximately 1½ million krans for motor transport, &c., taken over from him, and to be allowed to use the credit to meet certain requisitions issued by him, but not included in (*a*) above ?

(*c.*) Is General Dunsterville to be authorised to continue to maintain Bicharakof's troops at a monthly cost of about 4 million krans ?

Mr. Keynes had prepared a brief statement, which he circulated to the Committee, on our liabilities in Persia (E.C.–412). These liabilities (excluding the cost of British forces in Persia, which was bound to increase) had not hitherto exceeded 17 million krans a month, or 600,000*l.* The expenditure to-day was 14 million krans a month, which could be continued without a financial crisis; but directly we went beyond 17 million krans we approached the danger-point, unless we reopened the trade routes. The amount now asked for was 19 million krans.

The Chairman pointed out that 19 millions was not a recurrent liability, as it included a lump sum to clear Baratof's claims.

Mr. Keynes added that in estimating the proposed expenditure at 19 million krans, he had spread Baratof's claims over three months.

General Macdonogh said that the opinion of men on the spot had been consulted about Baratof's claims, and their opinion was to

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the effect that they could not be substantiated. In his view, the question was mainly political. He further pointed out that Baratof had handed over certain stores. The War Office did not recommend that 1½ million krans should be paid in cash to Baratof, but that we should pay his billeting requisitions up to the value of the stores handed over. There was something to be said for Baratof's claims, as between the 13th February and the 13th April he had only drawn 13½ millions instead of 20 millions.

Mr. Keynes said that the view of his Department was that the Committee should be on their guard against the squandering of unlimited funds on adventurers.

General Smuts agreed that the Committee must be careful, in view of possible developments, not to overstep the danger-point of credit. On the other hand, Baratof was upholding the credit of Russia and ourselves. He thought it was evident that the 1½ million krans must be paid.

The Chairman thought it was fairly clear that Baratof, from his own language, did not really expect to get the 8½ millions.

It was decided—

That the Treasury should be authorised to pay the 1½ million krans, but that they should refuse to admit the claim for the 8½ millions.

Mr. Keynes said that the amount disbursed on behalf of General Bicharakof was 2,200,000 krans a month; he was now said to need 4 millions. General Dunsterville had continued to pay the former amount without definite authority for so doing. The Treasury, however, would raise no objection to paying the 4 millions said to be necessary, although he must warn the Committee again to be cautious about their future commitments.

It was decided—

To sanction, for the present, a monthly disbursement of 4 million krans to Bicharakof through General Dunsterville.

Hedjaz Mission to Turkestan.

8. The Committee had before them various papers on the subject of the Hedjaz Mission to Turkestan and, in particular, a note by the Secretary of State for India (E.C.-399) dated the 23rd May, in which he strongly opposed the project.

The Chairman said that he understood the Committee were unanimous in thinking it most undesirable that the Mission should be permitted to proceed. The Foreign Office had submitted to him the following draft telegram to Sir Reginald Wingate:—

"Owing to the disturbed state of Persia, Turkestan, and Caucasus, it would be impossible for the King of the Hedjaz's delegates to travel at present. There is no immediate prospect of the situation ameliorating sufficiently to allow of the proposed journey. Please inform the King of the Hedjaz."

It was decided—

To authorise the despatch of the above telegram.

Bakhtiaris.

Subsidies to Ilkhani and Ilbegi.

9. With reference to Minute 3 of the Second Meeting, Lord Hardinge drew attention to Sir C. Marling's telegrams No. 335 (E.C.-186) and No. 434 (E.C.-368) regarding the arrangements to be made for the Ilkhani and Ilbegi. In the latter telegram, Sir C. Marling had pressed for an early decision on the question raised in his former despatch regarding the subsidy to be paid to the heads of the aforesaid clans. He notified the provisional arrangement to be

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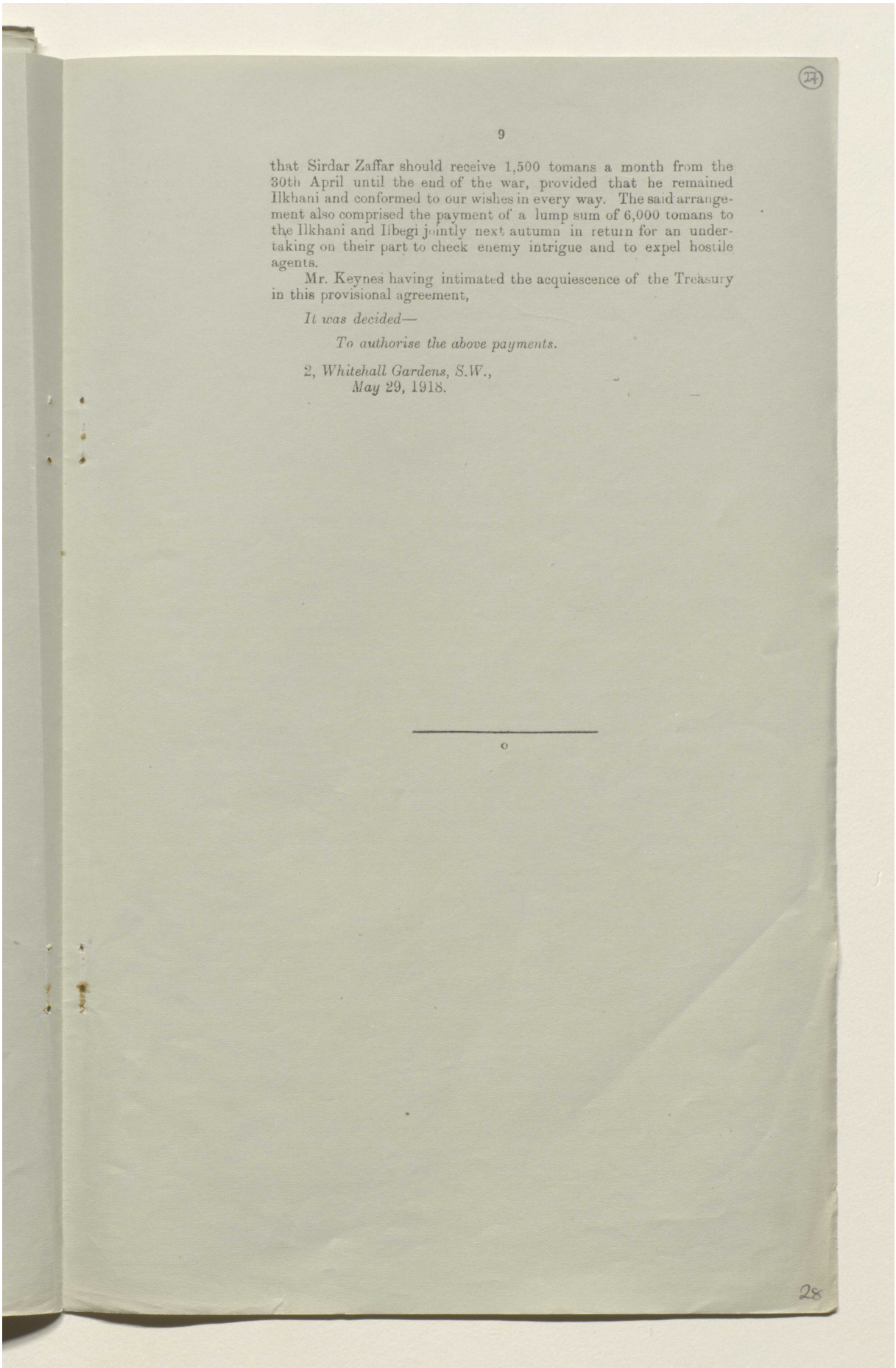

(27)

that Sirdar Zaffar should receive 1,500 tomans a month from the 30th April until the end of the war, provided that he remained Ilkhani and conformed to our wishes in every way. The said arrangement also comprised the payment of a lump sum of 6,000 tomans to the Ilkhani and Ilbegi jointly next autumn in return for an undertaking on their part to check enemy intrigue and to expel hostile agents.

Mr. Keynes having intimated the acquiescence of the Treasury in this provisional agreement,

It was decided—

To authorise the above payments.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
May 29, 1918.

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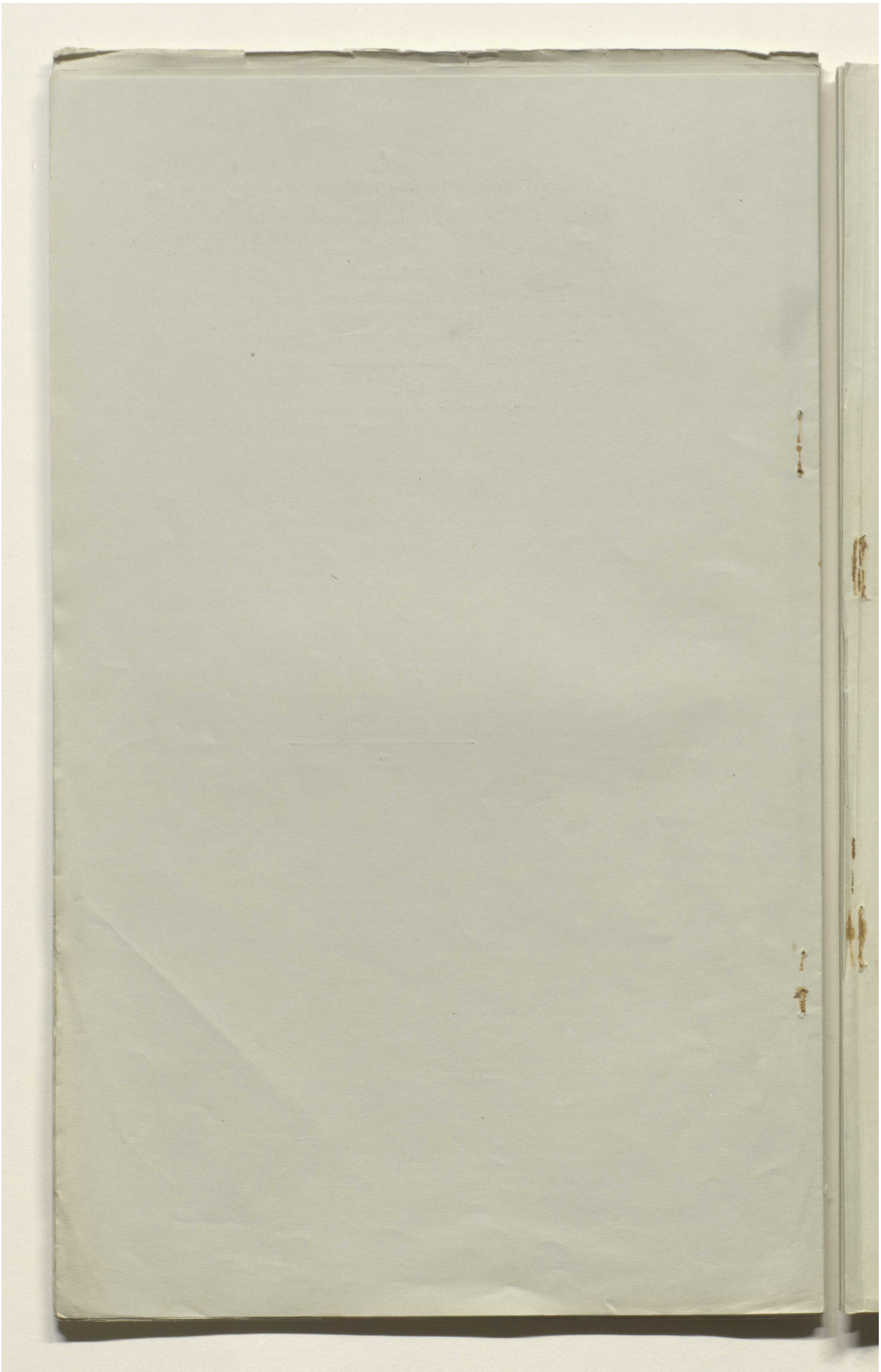

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Lord Curzon (28)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1918.

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E.C. 11th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, May 31, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (representing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, C.B., D.S.O. (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Colonel R. A. STEEL, C.I.E. (representing the Director of Military Intelligence).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Caucasus: General Dunsterville.

1. THE Chairman said that, since the last meeting, the situation both as regards General Dunsterville's Mission and Sir P. Sykes's position had developed rather sharply.

As the Committee were aware, General Dunsterville had suddenly announced his intention of going to Baku, and proposed to take with him a squadron of the 14th Hussars and a company of the Hampshire Regiment. He evidently contemplated considerable developments there, for he telegraphed later about requiring a brigade of artillery, and spoke of the co-operation of the Caspian Fleet. The Committee had been alarmed at so sudden a change of policy, and this alarm had at first been shared by our representatives at Teheran. It had accordingly been decided, at the last meeting, to instruct General Dunsterville not to proceed to the Caucasus, but to confine his activities to ensuring the security of the Khanikin–Resht road. What the Committee to-day had to consider was, first, the situation at Baku, and, second, the advice that had since been received from Sir C. Marling.

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At Baku there was apparently a local Government of some kind, which was understood to be friendly to us. Our vice-consul there had informed us that he had heard that two Turkish regiments had been allowed to pass through to Baku to assist the local Mussulman Division against the Baku Government. Mr. MacDonnell also stated that the immediate arrival of, at least, one British officer at Baku was of the utmost importance, in order, it seemed, to consolidate the friendly elements in that quarter. As regards Sir C. Marling, telegrams had been received indicating a change from his previous attitude. At first he had appeared to be against the proposed move to Baku. But in his telegram of the 28th May (E.C. 418), he stated that all his information went to show that Dunsterville was anxiously awaited at Baku, and it was only by his going there that the Caspian fleet could be secured; that there was also a prospect that we might be able to gain over the Jangalis, in which case Dunsterville's retreat from Baku would be assured; and, further, that in view of the extreme importance of securing the Fleet and destroying the oilfields, he hoped that the position might be re-examined. The Chairman pointed out that this involved a considerable expansion of the original Dunsterville programme.

The Chairman then read out telegram No. 473 from Sir Charles Marling, dated the 29th May, stating that the writer would be grateful for some indication of our immediate aims in North-West Persia; early in March he understood that a sufficient force was to be despatched to North-West Persia with a view to stabilising the situation there and prevent the ingress of enemy agents, but later also for the purpose of keeping open the road to the Caucasus. He now learned that Dunsterville's Mission was countermanded just at the moment when, so far as the former's information went, he had a better chance of achieving something than ever before, and when it seemed most necessary to take any risk in order to make things safe at Baku.

Lord R. Cecil said that he regarded this as a very mysterious telegram.

General Smuts regarded it as an attempt to review the whole situation. In March we had adopted a certain policy. Now, however, when conditions had changed, and there was a favourable opportunity of General Dunsterville doing good at Baku, we had prevented his going there, although it seemed that the Bolsheviks were friendly.

Mr. Montagu thought that the proposed Mission was interpreted in two mutually conflicting ways. There were really two proposals: (1) that General Dunsterville should go alone to Baku as an agent to cajole and persuade the friendly tribes in the neighbourhood; (2) General Dunsterville's own proposal to take with him some of the 14th Hussars and Hampshire Regiment, which would involve a departure from our policy, and the detachment of troops from the Hamadan-Kasvin line.

Lord R. Cecil thought that what General Dunsterville regarded as necessary at Baku was a force, and not merely an agent. That force might be either a mixed detachment of British troops or Bicharakoff's troops. In his mind there was no distinction between the two suggestions.

Mr. Montagu, referring to Mr. MacDonnell's message (E.C.–436), said that the invitation was that, as the Bolsheviks were apparently friendly, and were sending 300 infantry to Enzeli, General Dunsterville should go to Baku. He himself was impressed with the necessity of adhering to our policy, and not risking the dissipation of our strength on side-issues. Supposing General Dunsterville were in difficulties, it would be impossible for us either to protect or to reinforce him.

Lord R. Cecil pointed out that Baku was really part of our cordon, otherwise the Caspian would be handed over to our enemies.

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The Chairman pointed out that Mr. MacDonnell's telegram asked that Bicharakoff should be informed that the Bolsheviks were sending some of their own troops down from Baku to Enzeli.

Lord R. Cecil interpreted this to mean that the Bolsheviks were going to Enzeli so that Bicharakoff could go to Baku.

General Smuts agreed with this interpretation; the message meant that Bicharakoff was prepared to go north if a friendly force from the north came to Enzeli.

Colonel Steel agreed it was necessary to secure Enzeli before Bicharakoff and Dunsterville could start, and that was the reason why 300 Bolsheviks were going there.

General Radcliffe said the policy advocated by the War Office was to get the Caspian fleet away from Baku and to control the Caspian. This his department regarded as important; but in other respects it was most undesirable to embark on new commitments and to depart from the policy laid down by the Eastern Committee. The War Office principle was to leave the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, to decide what force was necessary to carry out that policy. General Marshall's mobile motor-car scheme had been endorsed by the Committee, and action was being taken accordingly. In his opinion it might be feasible to send one British officer to Baku, but this was quite a different matter from detaching a force there.

Mr. Montagu's view was that what was necessary was to concentrate at Enzeli and to send an agent through to consolidate the friendly elements and to get the fleet to Enzeli.

Lord Hardinge pointed out that Enzeli was a very indifferent port. From his own experience it was sometimes impossible to land there, and ships could not remain for any length of time. Baku was a really useful port, and the Caspian fleet was probably concentrated there. Astara was another possible port.

The Chairman assumed that the object of getting hold of the fleet was to prevent its use for transport purposes across the Caspian.

Lord R. Cecil said that in spite of the great weight of authority against him, he was still in favour of General Dunsterville's proposals. General Dunsterville was an officer of experience, and had a high reputation in India. He had been a long time in the district, and was aware of all the difficulties and dangers. He had been to Enzeli, and was acquainted with the local conditions and circumstances in the Caucasus. He was not a man to put up a madcap scheme, and must have good reasons for the advice he had given. He had in fact brought over Sir C. Marling to his view.

Lord Robert agreed as to the danger of dissipating one's forces, but there must be exceptions to this principle. Further, there were thousands of Armenians who were still in the Caucasus, and possibly General Dunsterville thought that if he could get hold of them he would thereby do more to protect Northern Persia than by holding the Hamadan–Kasvin line.

Mr. Montagu said that in order to get to Baku, General Dunsterville had virtually suggested the abandonment of that line.

The Chairman thought the proposal in its larger aspect was a gigantic gamble. In arriving at a decision, the Committee were considerably embarrassed owing to the fluctuating advice given by Sir C. Marling.

Lord Robert Cecil suggested that a telegram might be sent to this effect: "We are unaware of the local circumstances. We regard it essential to hold the Hamadan–Kasvin line. If General Dunsterville can proceed without prejudice to this, we are prepared to act on your advice."

General Smuts agreed it was a gamble for big stakes. No doubt General Dunsterville would take a number of his officers and non-commissioned officers with him. The G.O.C., Mesopotamia, however, would not permit any troops to accompany him and the Eastern Committee must accept General Marshall's decision in

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this respect. Otherwise, a free hand might be given to General Dunsterville.

The Chairman pointed out that General Dunsterville's departure would leave his force without a commander. Would it not be possible for a substitute to be sent instead?

General Smuts said that General Dunsterville had with him the officers and N.C.O.'s who formed his Mission, but he was also in command of certain troops of General Marshall's, which he could not take away without the latter's consent. The situation was one of great uncertainty, but those on the spot who had better knowledge of the circumstances seemed fairly sanguine as to the success of the project.

Mr. Montagu said he agreed with General Smuts. In his view there was no objection to General Dunsterville proceeding as a Mission only and taking with him certain officers and N.C.O.'s, but he must not move any troops; and, before he went, he must be satisfied that no evil consequences would arise from his absence.

Lord Robert Cecil proposed that any instructions issued should contain the suggestion that General Dunsterville might possibly send a substitute.

The Chairman confessed that he still regarded the proposal with apprehension. The departure of General Dunsterville and Bicharakoff's forces would leave a large gap unguarded, or protected only by some 300 doubtful Bolsheviks.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that there must recently have been a great change in the local situation and a reversal of the balance of power at Baku. This was possibly due to the presence of thousands of Armenians at the latter place.

The Chairman thought that the activities of Colonel Stokes, who was now engaged in pacifying the Jangalis, hitherto our enemies, might also have contributed to this change.

General Radcliffe warned the Committee that it was possible the invitation from Baku might be a trap.

It was decided—

(1.) *That there was no objection to General Dunsterville, or a selected officer in his place, accompanied, if necessary, by certain other officers, proceeding to Baku as a Mission, provided he was satisfied that the work of those he left behind would not suffer by his absence. He should take no troops with him except such limited numbers of men as the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, might think it necessary to send as an escort.*

(2.) *That the Director of Military Operations, in consultation with General Smuts, should draw up a telegram to the above effect for the approval of the Chairman.*

(3.) *That the Admiralty should be consulted as to the Caspian situation, and should be asked to report upon the value of the Caspian ports, the importance of securing the Caspian fleet, and the possibility of destroying the oil-fields.*

(4.) *The Foreign Office should ask Sir C. Marling for such detailed information as he might be able to furnish about the situation at Baku and the objects at which General Dunsterville should aim.*

Persian Alliance.

2. Mr. Montagu said that he wished to draw the attention of the Committee to certain telegrams which had been circulated regarding the question of an alliance with Persia.

The Chairman said that the matter had been discussed by the Committee at their previous meeting. The subject had come up after the Secretary of State for India had been called away. The decision of the Committee was that they adhered to their previous

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decision (E.C.–375), and that there was nothing more to be done for the present (Minute 6 (1) of the proceedings of the 10th Meeting).

Mr. Montagu pointed out that the situation was changing from day to day. The Committee were in ignorance of the real position in South Persia at the present moment. Soulet was said to be back and full of fight, and the South Persia Rifles were not to be relied upon. In his view our only hope lay in an alliance.

General Smuts said that he did not regard the situation in a tragic light, but thought it might be relieved by the reinforcement of Sir P. Sykes by two battalions.

Mr. Montagu considered that this reinforcement would be quite inadequate.

The Chairman was of opinion that the present occasion was hardly suitable for the discussion of the entire question of our Persian policy. He was prepared to name a very early date for a meeting of the Committee, if the Secretary of State for India desired that the whole problem should be re-examined. In the meantime he was preparing a paper on the question arising from a memorandum he had received from the Secretary of State for India.

Mr. Montagu said that he accepted the Chairman's decision, but he wished it to be recorded in the Minutes that he regarded the subject as one which arose from their discussion that afternoon, and, further, as one of extreme urgency. He undertook to prepare at once a revised note giving his latest views on the question.

Situation in South Persia: Sir P. Sykes.

3. The Chairman read out two telegrams from the Commander-in-Chief in India, the gist of which was as follows :—

Telegram No. 42357, 30th May: Sir P. Sykes wired that his staff and he considered that two battalions and one mountain battery were the maximum force that could be moved up, and that it would be adequate to deal with any opposition on the Tarum–Niriz–Shiraz line. The certainty of reinforcements would keep the Kawam wholeheartedly on our side. In the opinion of the Indian Government about 6,000 or 7,000 reinforcements were required for Bushire. In Shiraz they had supplies for two months, and from the new harvest could buy or seize enough for a third month. Soulet would be attacked if a favourable opportunity presented itself. The difficulty was that the South Persia Rifles might mutiny, and the Kawam Arabs might join against us if we have the slightest reverse. The Indian garrison was therefore necessary in Shiraz, which left little margin for an offensive column. Sykes had decided to allow officers and men of the South Persia Rifles choice of resignation, but had promised a bonus of two months' pay to all who would stand by us to the end of the war. In Sykes's view the main cause of the disloyal action of the South Persia Rifles was a note delivered by the Legation which provoked an unfriendly reply by the Persian Government and led to desertions on a large scale and the tragedy at Khaneh Zinian. Sykes had not been consulted by the Minister in the negotiation he had conducted with the Persian Government relating to the South Persia Rifles.

Telegram No. 42435, 30th May: Although the War Office, in their telegram of the 29th May, stated that it was neither desirable nor necessary to reinforce Sykes, this was not the view held either by Sykes himself or the consul. Control of the South Persia Rifles had been discussed for the last year and a half, but it had been decided last March that Sykes should remain under Marling's orders, although so far as the Commander-in-Chief in India knew, Marling had issued no orders to Sykes in regard to his present difficulties. Sykes proposed two lines of operation, viz., viâ Bushire and Bandar Abbas, but in neither case could reinforcements reach him in less than two months from date of departure from India. It was apparent that the disarmament and disbandment of the Fars

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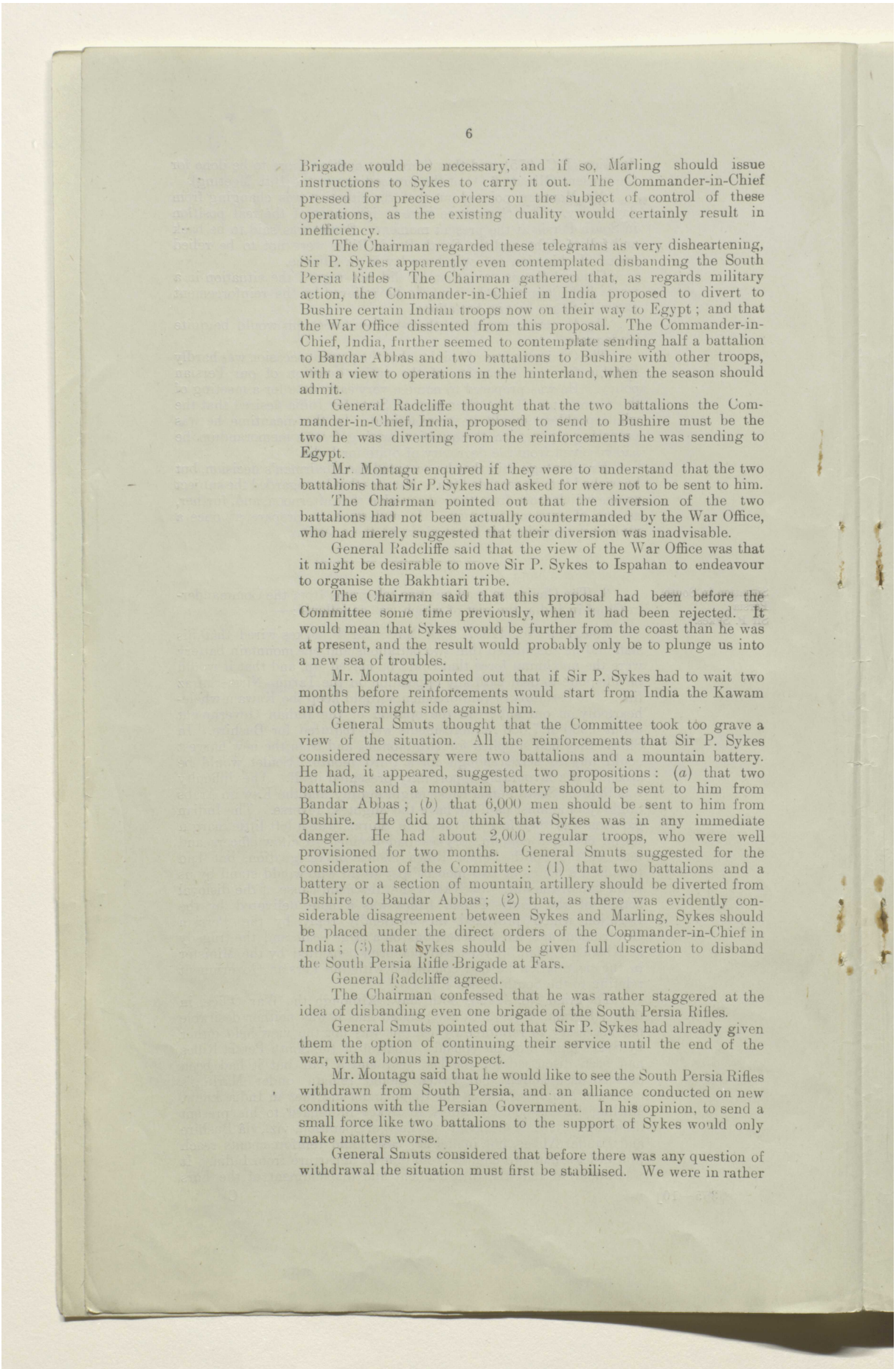

Brigade would be necessary, and if so, Marling should issue instructions to Sykes to carry it out. The Commander-in-Chief pressed for precise orders on the subject of control of these operations, as the existing duality would certainly result in inefficiency.

The Chairman regarded these telegrams as very disheartening, Sir P. Sykes apparently even contemplated disbanding the South Persia Rifles. The Chairman gathered that, as regards military action, the Commander-in-Chief in India proposed to divert to Bushire certain Indian troops now on their way to Egypt; and that the War Office dissented from this proposal. The Commander-in-Chief, India, further seemed to contemplate sending half a battalion to Bandar Abbas and two battalions to Bushire with other troops, with a view to operations in the hinterland, when the season should admit.

General Radcliffe thought that the two battalions the Commander-in-Chief, India, proposed to send to Bushire must be the two he was diverting from the reinforcements he was sending to Egypt.

Mr. Montagu enquired if they were to understand that the two battalions that Sir P. Sykes had asked for were not to be sent to him.

The Chairman pointed out that the diversion of the two battalions had not been actually countermanded by the War Office, who had merely suggested that their diversion was inadvisable.

General Radcliffe said that the view of the War Office was that it might be desirable to move Sir P. Sykes to Ispahan to endeavour to organise the Bakhtiari tribe.

The Chairman said that this proposal had been before the Committee some time previously, when it had been rejected. It would mean that Sykes would be further from the coast than he was at present, and the result would probably only be to plunge us into a new sea of troubles.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that if Sir P. Sykes had to wait two months before reinforcements would start from India the Kawam and others might side against him.

General Smuts thought that the Committee took too grave a view of the situation. All the reinforcements that Sir P. Sykes considered necessary were two battalions and a mountain battery. He had, it appeared, suggested two propositions: (*a*) that two battalions and a mountain battery should be sent to him from Bandar Abbas; (*b*) that 6,000 men should be sent to him from Bushire. He did not think that Sykes was in any immediate danger. He had about 2,000 regular troops, who were well provisioned for two months. General Smuts suggested for the consideration of the Committee: (1) that two battalions and a battery or a section of mountain artillery should be diverted from Bushire to Bandar Abbas; (2) that, as there was evidently considerable disagreement between Sykes and Marling, Sykes should be placed under the direct orders of the Commander-in-Chief in India; (3) that Sykes should be given full discretion to disband the South Persia Rifle Brigade at Fars.

General Radcliffe agreed.

The Chairman confessed that he was rather staggered at the idea of disbanding even one brigade of the South Persia Rifles.

General Smuts pointed out that Sir P. Sykes had already given them the option of continuing their service until the end of the war, with a bonus in prospect.

Mr. Montagu said that he would like to see the South Persia Rifles withdrawn from South Persia, and an alliance conducted on new conditions with the Persian Government. In his opinion, to send a small force like two battalions to the support of Sykes would only make matters worse.

General Smuts considered that before there was any question of withdrawal the situation must first be stabilised. We were in rather

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a hopeless position and might find ourselves at any moment at war with Persia. Was it the moment to seek alliance with Persia when we were forcing Indian troops into their country and conducting operations with the South Persia Rifles?

The Chairman thought there was some misapprehension. The presence of British troops in the Gulf ports and their vicinity was no novelty to the Persian Government; and he did not think that the proposed reinforcement of Sykes need be regarded as a *hostile* act any more than the reinforcements which had previously taken place.

It was decided—

(1.) *That a telegram, to be repeated to the Minister at Tehran, should be sent to India to say that in future Sir P. Sykes would be under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief in India.*

(2.) *That it was necessary that not less than two battalions, with the necessary medical services, should be sent as soon as possible to the support of Sir P. Sykes, it being left to the Commander-in-Chief in India to decide whence these troops should be found.*

(3.) *That the above reinforcements should be sent to Sir P. Sykes viâ Bandar Abbas and not Bushire.*

(4.) *That a telegram in the above sense should be drafted in the War Office, in consultation with General Smuts, and submitted to the Chairman.*

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
May 31, 1918.

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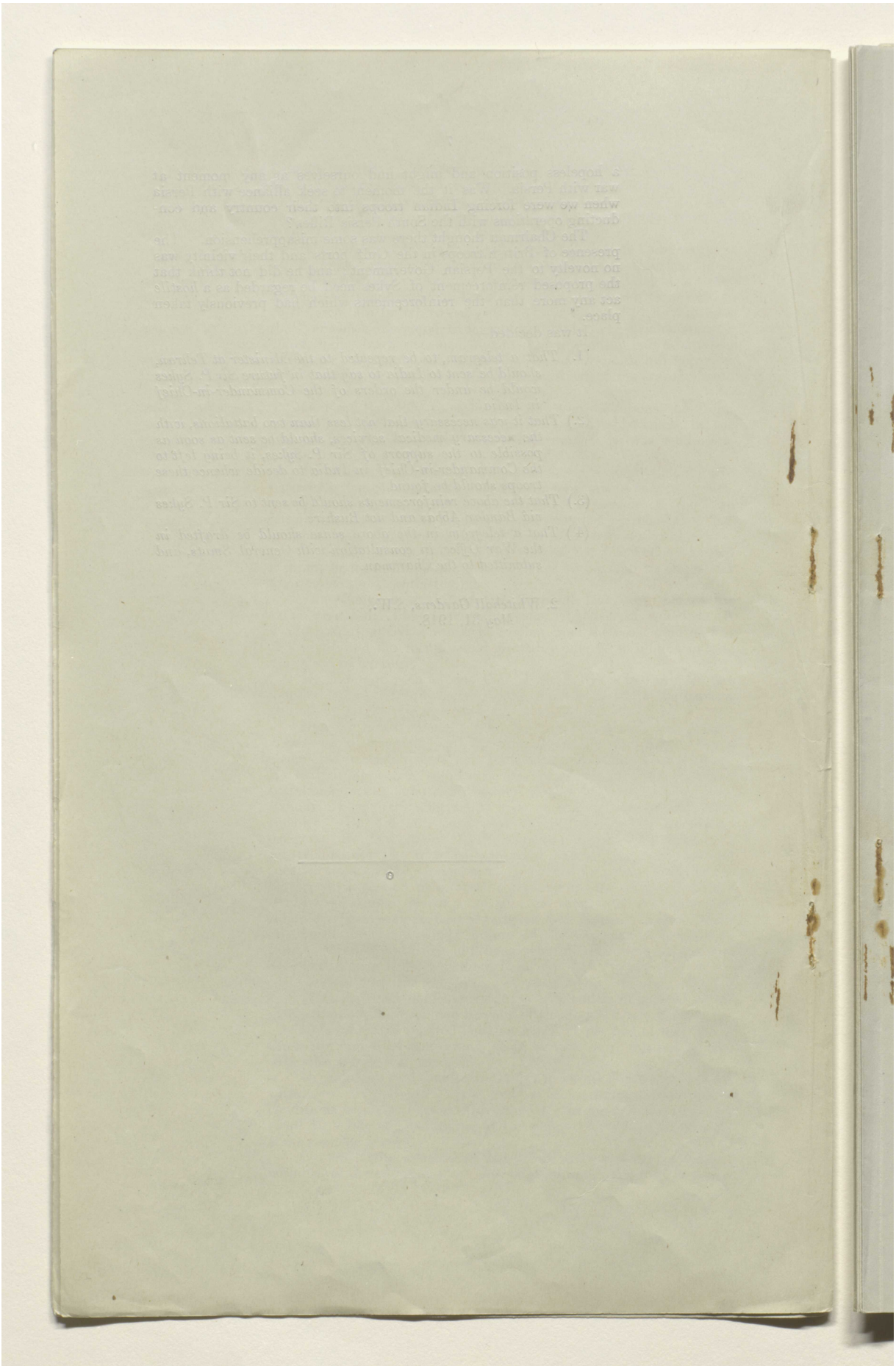

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Lord Curzon.

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Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1918.

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E.C. 12th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, June 5, 1918, at 6 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Caucasus.

General Dunsterville.

1. The Chairman said that since the last meeting, when certain decisions had been reached as regards General Dunsterville and Sir P. Sykes respectively (*Minutes* 1 *and* 3 *of the* 11*th meeting*), several important telegrams had passed between London, Persia, and India which required the Committee's immediate consideration. The decision of the Committee as regards General Dunsterville had been communicated on the 1st June by the War Office to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia (E.C.–448), to the effect that a useful purpose might be served by the presence at Baku of one or two British officers; the instructions therefore sent on the 27th May in War Office telegram No. 59064 were so far modified as to allow Dunsterville himself to go to Baku or one or more officers from his mission, at General Marshall's discretion, in order to organise the destruction of the oil-fields, to secure the Caspian fleet, or for other military purposes; no troops except under General Marshall's orders should accompany the above officers, as we regarded the effective occupation of the road *viâ* Kasvin to the Caspian as the first military necessity.

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On the 2nd June a telegram had been sent to Sir C. Marling (E.C.–454) to the effect that the Committee considered it essential to hold, with adequate numbers, the road Kermanshah–Hamadan–Kasvin and safeguard the line Kasvin to the Caspian; subject to these conditions they had no objection to the proposal that General Dunsterville himself or officers selected by him from Dunsterforce should go to Baku; we were not clear whether it was proposed that Bicharakoff or any portion of his friends should also go to Baku, as in that case we did not see how the line Kasvin to the Caspian could be held; we were equally in the dark as to the situation at Enzeli and as to the means by which the above movements were to be effected. The telegram concluded by asking Sir C. Marling what he regarded as the exact object to be attained by British officers at Baku. Securing the Russian fleet, the destruction of the oil-fields, and assistance to local Government in opposing the Turks were mentioned as possible aims, but we had not been informed how these objects were to be effected or to what port the fleet, if seized, would go. To this telegram no reply had yet been received. On the 1st June, however, Marling had telegraphed (E.C.–455) to the effect that unless we could count on Jangali assistance, he thought the programme laid for Dunsterville, that is, to purchase the Caspian fleet and keep open the road to Enzeli, was not feasible with the force which the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, proposed to place at his disposal. The attitude of the Jangali was still very doubtful, and Marling was not sure that their plan was not to induce Bicharakoff, by friendly assurances, to leave Persia and to lure Stokes to Enzeli, and not to let him return to Teheran. As regards securing the fleet, this seemed entirely out of the question. Negotiations could only be carried out at Baku, where we would only be welcomed for such assistance as we might give in opposing the Turkish advance; and with the bitter disappointment which Dunsterville's non-appearance would arouse, we could not hope that our desire to secure the fleet would be well received; moreover, we could only act through Bicharakoff, who was a disappointed man.

The Chairman, proceeding, said that we had then the General Officer Commanding Mesopotamia's telegram of the 4th June (E.C.–464), which said that Dunsterville had reached Kasvin, where Bicharakoff was under his orders; the latter would go to Baku and Astrakhan as soon as our thousand infantry and armoured car squadron arrived, in order to hold the Enzeli–Kasvin line. Dunsterville's proposal was to despatch the armoured car squadron with Bicharakoff and, later, such other troops as could be spared. Dunsterville regarded this as the best opportunity which had so far arisen, and his wish was to proceed eventually himself to Baku, where he believed we might yet save the Krasnovodsk cotton and the Baku oil, and also secure entire control of the Caspian. Dunsterville further thought that to send one or two British officers *only* to Baku would produce no effect, as Baku expected effective support from us, and that the destruction of the oilfields was unnecessary. For the above reasons General Marshall, in his telegram, recommended that Dunsterville should be given a free hand as regards the despatch to Baku of the British troops he suggests, subject to the condition that he (General Marshall) retained control over them. The telegram concluded with the request that this proposal should be approved.

Finally, on the 2nd June, Colonel Stokes had telegraphed from Kasvin saying that the Jangali delegates had received a reply from Resht that Kuchik Khan was willing to meet Bicharakoff and his friends. Bicharakoff was not himself going to Resht but proposed to send Nikitine, who was formerly Russian consul at Urmia. General Dunsterville was sending Colonel Stokes with Nikitine, and they were starting early on the morning of the 3rd June with the delegates for Resht.

The Chairman said that these telegrams did not leave a very clear impression as to what was actually intended. It appeared that

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General Dunsterville himself did not wish to go to Baku until the armoured cars had arrived. The Committee, he thought, would be glad to know what these various movements meant in point of time.

General Macdonogh said that according to a telegram received from General Marshall about ten days previously, we might assume that Resht would be reached about the 30th June. He said that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was strongly of opinion that Dunsterville should not go to Baku until he had secured the road to Enzeli and had cleared up the Jangali situation. When this had been done, Dunsterville should submit fresh proposals.

The Chairman drew attention to a further telegram, dated the 1st June, from the military attaché, Teheran, No. 466, quoting a message from Colonel Pike at Vladikaskas of the 10th May, stating that the situation in Trans-Caucasia was now beyond any control or assistance by us; the Government was openly Turco-Germanophil, while the majority of the people were the same, with the single exception of the Armenians; and amongst the Mohammedans, in particular, there was a very bitter feeling against the British. The telegram concluded with the words: "I repeat finally that at present we can do nothing in Trans-Caucasia; the moment may arrive later."

General Macdonogh said that since Colonel Pike sent the above message the situation had become worse. We had heard of two Turkish regiments on the 25th May moving from Tiflis to Baku, while two German battalions were said to have disembarked recently at Batoum.

Lord R. Cecil pointed out that the only people who were putting up any fight against the invaders were the Armenians, an important exception.

The Chairman said it appeared that the armoured car force could not reach Baku for another three weeks, and, meantime, the situation at Baku was precarious, and if Dunsterville were to go there now his position might be one of great danger.

The Director of Military Intelligence referred to the General Officer Commanding Mesopotamia's telegram of the 4th June (E.C.–464), in which it was stated that Bicharakoff was to go to Baku as soon as our thousand infantry and the armoured car squadron arrived, and the Chief of Imperial General Staff hoped that a decision would be deferred until these troops were on the spot.

Lord R. Cecil apprehended that if our enemies occupied Baku, we should have to evacuate Teheran, which would be enveloped from the north via Krasnovodsk.

The Chairman thought this hardly likely—the enemy might indeed, if they secured the Caspian fleet, get control of the Trans-Caspian Railway, which would be a serious menace to Central Asia, but they would not thereby either cut off or command Teheran.

Mr. Montagu said that the Committee had two interpretations of General Dunsterville's mission to consider, as he pointed out at the previous meeting. He thought that if it were merely a question of General Dunsterville going to Baku, in order to try and persuade people there to give us control of the fleet and of the oil, it was not necessary to fix any date.

General Macdonogh pointed out that General Dunsterville was now not advocating going at once.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that it was our Vice-Consul and not Marling who had said that no objection has been raised to Dunsterville's arrival, and that Mr. McDonnell thought that the immediate arrival of at least one British officer was of the utmost importance. The Chairman thought it clear, in view of Dunsterville's attitude, that this policy could no longer be pursued, and that we must wait till the Hamadan–Caspian line was effectively held. But events were moving so rapidly that he doubted very much whether,

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by the time that the force was ready, Dunsterville would be able to proceed to Baku at all.

General Smuts suggested that General Marshall be instructed to continue his preparations and to get the road in order, but, before any move was made, to await our explicit authority. He agreed with the Chairman that, in the course of the next four weeks, there might be considerable developments.

General Macdonogh said that what the Chief of the Imperial General Staff wanted was that before he started for Baku, Dunsterville should make sure of the Kasvin–Enzeli road. If Dunsterville tried to go to Baku, which he would have to do by sea, he would proceed on his own responsibility, and unless he secured the fleet he would certainly run the risk of being cut off.

Mr. Balfour said he failed to perceive the relation between the security of the road and Dunsterville's proposed mission. It appeared to him to be two entirely separate problems which had no connection either tactical or strategical, or in regard to supplies and population, &c.

The Chairman agreed that the two problems were distinct, but the one was the chronological sequel of the other. If Dunsterville went now, he would leave the road open; if, however, he went when the road had been made safe he would be conducting an entirely independent operation. All the Committee had to agree upon now was, that nothing should be done until the full equipment for the road had been provided, and that when this took place, our sanction should be asked before further action was taken. Meanwhile, Dunsterville could make the necessary preparations.

Mr. Montagu considered that General Marshall's proposition that Dunsterville should have a free hand must be turned down. General Marshall had said that Bicharakoff would go to Baku and Astrakhan as soon as our thousand infantry arrived, and Dunsterville's own proposal was to despatch the armoured cars with Bicharakoff. Mr. Montagu said that he wished to know exactly what was the position with regard to the armoured cars.

General Macdonogh said that it was not easy to follow from the telegrams exactly what was really intended. It appeared to him, however, that the suggestion was that Dunsterville should wait until the armoured car squadron and the Ford unit arrived on the Kasvin road. When these forces were actually on the road, Dunsterville would send Bicharakoff with the armoured car squadron to Baku. He understood that the decision of the Committee was to telegraph to General Marshall that all preparations should be made to send Bicharakoff and the armoured car squadron, in due course, to Baku, but before they actually started we must be referred to again.

It was decided—

That the War Office should telegraph to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia in the above sense.

Situation in South Persia.

Sir P. Sykes.

2. The Chairman said that a telegram had just been received from the Commander-in-Chief, India, dated the 4th June (E.C.–464) forwarding a telegram of the 3rd June from Sir P. Sykes. Sir P. Sykes stated that Soulet had offered conditions to Firman Firmah to the effect that the British should engage neither to interfere with his tribes, nor to enter his territory; that Soulet had approximately 9,000 men within 85 miles of Shiraz and was expecting further reinforcements within a week; that he was, to-day, not merely Chief of the Kashgais but the head of a powerful confederacy supported by German money and engineered by German brains. Firman Firmah and the Kawam were both friendly though the latter would not answer for his people. For the present Shiraz was quiet, but Firman Firmah and the Kawam said that if Indian troops were

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invested or defeated the South Persia Rifles could not he relied upon. In the opinion of the consul, Firman Firmah and the Kawam, apart from sending reinforcements viâ Bundar Abbas it would only be possible to restore the position by the prompt despatch to Bushire of a force strong enough to march inland; a raid from Bushire, followed by retirement, would only make things worse. Sir Percy thought it was possible that Soulet might be kept busy, for a week or more, parleying, but he asked that a force from Bushire should be prepared to start before the week was over. He regarded the position as critical. The whole problem of our policy in South Persia demanded an immediate decision as things had reached a point when we could only restore the situation in Fars by immediately applying sufficient force inland from Bushire to draw away Soulet's army before the latter had been able to closely invest the Indian troops at Shiraz (E.C.–463.)

The Chairman said that the Committee had so far given authority that two battalions should be sent to reinforce Sir P. Sykes from India viâ Bundar Abbas, as although the Shiraz–Bundar Abbas route was much longer than the road from Bushire, it was also much safer. We had hoped that Sykes would be able to hold his own until these reinforcements could reach him; it appeared, however, that the situation had suddenly become critical, and Sykes was asking for help to be sent through Bushire by means of a force sufficiently strong to march inland and entice Soulet away. What exactly did this mean? The reinforcements would land at Bushire, which was a friendly town in the occupation of British troops; it would have 50 miles to march over the plains. The Kashgais in the winter came down to the plains, but in summer they were up in the hills, which rose in some cases to a height of 6,000 or 7,000 feet. The road from the foot of the hills to Shiraz ran over 60 miles through appalling country with four dangerous passes to cross. Were these reinforcements intended by Sir P. Sykes to fight the Kashgais in this impossible terrain, or were they to remain in the plains in the hope of enticing Soulet from the hills? If the latter was the intention, it was extremely improbable that the Kashgais would be induced to play the part allotted to them.

Mr. Montagu said that, moreover, these reinforcements were expected to start from Bushire in a week.

Colonel Gribbon said that the War Office did not wish to send any force to Bushire, but that these operations were now under the Commander-in-Chief India's orders and that he should be consulted.

General Smuts referred to the Commander-in-Chief India's telegram of the 29th May (E.C.—461) in which he said that his present action had been to order half a battalion to Bundar Abbas and two battalions to Bushire. Sir Charles Munro hoped that Sykes would be able to hold out in Shiraz until October, in which case he proposed, if necessary, to despatch a column of one brigade, one battery, and one company of sappers and miners, to Kazerun from Bushire. Again, the following day, the Commander-in-Chief, India, had wired (E.C.—462) as follows:—

> "You will see from Sykes's own telegram that he proposed two lines of operations, viâ Bushire and Bundar Abbas, but in neither case could reinforcements reach him in less than two months from the date of departure from India, for which period Sykes must be prepared to maintain his position in Shiraz."

The Chairman said that in the Commander-in-Chief's view no considerable operations could take place until October. It appeared rather remarkable that the Commander-in-Chief had sent on Sir P. Sykes's latest telegram without any comment, and he also had said nothing about our telegram regarding the two battalions to Bundar Abbas.

General Smuts said that the operations had now been placed in

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the hands of the Commander-in-Chief in India. It was evident that telegrams were crossing each other, and he suggested that further telegrams from the Commander-in-Chief, replying to our own, should be awaited.

The Chairman thought that it would be safer to telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief asking both for his definite opinion on the telegram about the two battalions and also for his comments on Sykes's last message.

General Macdonogh said of course it was absurd of Sykes to say that troops must be sent within a week; the War Office view was that certainly no force should operate until October.

Mr. Montagu suggested that the Commander-in-Chief in India was really in no better a position to form a judgment than the Committee. The situation was most mysterious. Soulet had 9,000 men with more coming in, and as soon as the parleying was over, he would make Sykes's position impossible. In Mr. Montagu's view there was something to be said for Soulet's contention that British troops had no business in his territory, and robberies committed there were no concern of ours.

General Smuts said he could not share Mr. Montagu's view that the situation was so very serious. After all, Sykes had 2,000 regular troops, with supplies for two months. These ought to make a very good show against Soulet's irregulars.

Lord R. Cecil reminded the Committee that there was a possibility of Soulet being joined by the Kawam.

General Macdonogh said that from a soldier's point of view the worst thing that Sykes could do would be to allow himself to be invested in Shiraz. He had two courses open to him: (1) to attack Soulet (2) to evacuate Shiraz. In any case, Soulet's men were liable as time went on to drift away.

Mr. Montagu said that he did not understand why it was that our troops were in Soulet's territory. He suggested that his alternative, viz., to try and make terms with Soulet, could not be worse than the two courses proposed by the Director of Military Intelligence.

Mr. Oliphant pointed out that the difficulty in negotiating with Soulet was that he had never yet kept his word.

Mr. Montagu enquired whether it would not be possible for Firman Firmah to appoint someone to Soulet's place as Chief of the Kashgais. It appeared that the Persian Government was either paid by Soulet to make things difficult for us, or paid by us to make things difficult for Soulet. Could we not operate through the Persian Government in some way?

Lord R. Cecil said that there was no Persian Government to-day. Vossugh, who was a likely candidate for the post of Prime Minister, thought that if he came into power he would be able to settle Soulet.

Mr. Montagu said that there was some obscure influence at Teheran which he was not able to fathom. He was aware that Teheran could not issue orders, but Soulet had often said that he could not do this or that because of the Persian Government. How did that Government operate? Was it by money?

The Chairman thought that the steps to be taken by the Committee were two, one positive, the other negative; the first, to telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief in India in the sense suggested above, and the second, to await his reply to our previous telegram.

Lord R. Cecil suggested that if we adopted the positive course, we might add that in the event of our hearing that Vossugh had formed a Cabinet we should ask him to deal with Soulet.

Mr. Montagu, referring to the Commander-in-Chief India's telegram of the 4th June (E.C.-463), thought it would be useful for the Committee to see the report, which the telegram stated the Consul was submitting on Soulet's conditions to Firman Firmah. The

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Committee were all agreed that in the present circumstances no immediate assistance could be given to Sir P. Sykes. That being the case, in his opinion negotiations offered the only solution.

The Committee decided that—

The War Office should telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief in India, asking for his comments on Sir P. Sykes's telegram of the 3rd June, and that his reply to War Office telegram about the despatch of two battalions to Bundar Abbas should be awaited.

Propaganda in Mesopotamia.

3. Mr. Montagu said that his Department had addressed the War Office on the 5th June on the subject of the proposed deputation of Mr. Percival Landon to Mesopotamia on behalf of the Ministry of Information. The letter stated that, whatever view might be taken of Mr. Landon's personal qualifications, the question should first be decided whether it was desirable, on broad grounds of policy, that such delicate and important questions as those mentioned in the early part of War Office telegram No. 58581, dated the 18th May, 1918, to the G.O.C. Mesopotamia, should be ventilated in the Public Press. The letter further stated that in the opinion of the Secretary of State for India, the project should not be proceeded with until it had been referred to the Eastern Committee.

Mr. Montagu said that he thought that there was considerable danger to be apprehended from the activity of propagandists in Persia at present.

The Chairman said that Mr. Landon had accompanied the expedition which had been sent to Thibet when he (Lord Curzon) had been Viceroy of India. Judging from his experience on that occasion, Mr. Landon would be a quite trustworthy person to send.

Mr. Shuckburgh informed the Committee that Sir Percy Cox did not wish Mr. Landon to visit Mesopotamia for propaganda.

General Macdonogh stated that the Minister of Information did not want Mr. Landon to go to Mesopotamia for definite propagandist purposes, but merely to collect material for his Department so that suitable arrangements could be made, if and when it was decided to start a propaganda there.

The Chairman thought that as Sir P. Cox was opposed to Mr. Landon's going, the matter should be dropped for the present.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
June 6, 1918.

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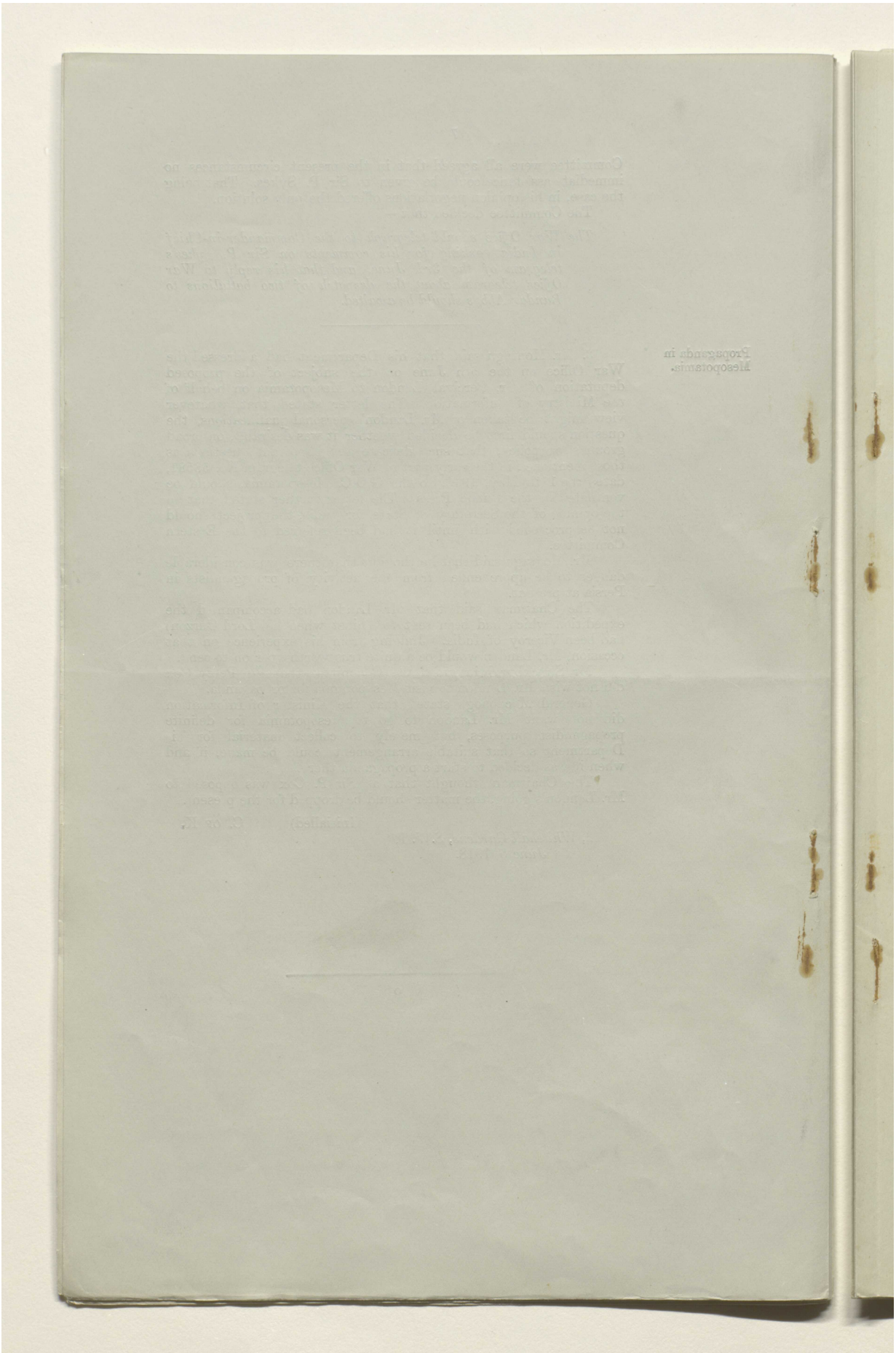

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Lord Curzon. (36)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 13th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, June 11, 1918, *at* 5·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, *Treasury.*

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary.*

Caucasus: General Dunsterville.

1. The Chairman said that the situation changed so rapidly from day to day that it was difficult to follow it. A recent telegram from the War Office to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, contained instructions to the effect that the latter should endeavour to obtain the complete control of all shipping on the Caspian, as it would not be enough to secure the control of the gun-boats alone. He could not recall that definite instructions to this effect had ever been given by the Eastern Committee.

General Macdonogh said that they were instructions that had been issued some months back by the late Persian Committee. He undertook to find out exactly how they originated and their precise terms.

The Chairman, proceeding, said that after the last meeting of the Committee the War Office had communicated (E.C.–492) the Committee's decision that General Dunsterville should make preparations to despatch an armed force to Baku, but that no movement on that place should be made without further reference

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to, and definite instructions from, London. A telegram (E.C.–491) had been received on the 7th instant from the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, regarding the security of the Hamadan–Kasvin road. Then, on the 8th instant, Dunsterville had sent an important telegram (E.C.–496) saying that he had conferred recently with the Armenian leaders from Baku, and that information from other sources gave him hope that it might be possible to save Baku, which would also mean control of the Caspian. He might possibly be at Baku with Bicharakoff by the 20th June; it depended on the nature of the resistance of Kuchik Khan: and it was possible that Turkish troops might be there before them, but he thought he would be able to hold out against a considerable Turkish force, only, however, if Baku knew that actual British troops were coming. They would be much encouraged in the first instance by the arrival of the armoured car squadron, but he would like a battalion of British infantry and a battery of field artillery to be also sent up as soon as possible. He anticipated that great results might be achieved with this small amount of troops. The telegram concluded with the information that Bicharakoff and his partisans were to proceed to Enzeli the following day. The Chairman thought that three things were clear from this message:—

(*a.*) That Bicharakoff and his men had started;
(*b.*) That Dunsterville wished to get to Baku;
(*c.*) That Dunsterville contemplated a considerable military expedition in order to anticipate the enemy and achieve great results. To this the War Office had replied to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, that it was presumed that he had communicated to General Dunsterville the substance of their recent telegrams, which contained the policy laid down by the Government. Then, on the 6th June, Mr. Macdonnell wired from Baku that, if it became known that no British assistance could be expected there, the result would be that the Armenians would go over to Turkey and the Bolsheviks would probably go over to Germany, thus making it impossible to ensure the safety of the fleet or to destroy the stocks. It was thought at Tiflis that Baku could not hold out against an attack for any length of time. This telegram the Chairman thought was rather surprising, for it emanated from a man who, a very short time ago, had been urging that only one or two officers should proceed to Baku. Lastly, there was a telegram from our military agent for the Caucasus, which stated that the situation in Northern Caucasus was at the moment quiet; that it was reported that Rostov had been captured by the Bolsheviks; that there were signs that the latter might change their policy and become more amenable to Baku; and that it would be very inadvisable for Dunsterville to make any move at present on Baku, as it was necessary to arrive at a working basis and proper understanding with the Bolsheviks, who at present were suspicious of our policy and aspirations. The Chairman thought that too much importance should not be attached to this telegram, as it was dated the 16th May.

The above was the situation so far as our information went, and, as far as he could see, there seemed to be nothing that the Committee could do at present.

General Macdonogh said that he thought either General Dunsterville had not been kept fully informed or else he had not quite grasped the situation. It was ridiculous to send a small force and the armoured-car squadron to Baku. Information received by us on the 25th May was to the effect that two Turkish regiments had passed through Tiflis on their way to Baku on the 22nd of that month. The only force holding Baku consisted of some 4,000 Bolsheviks and some 3,000 Armenians. Baku itself had no defences, and consequently considerable forces would be required to hold it. We had also heard that there were two German battalions at Poti,

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and that the 217th German division was moving to the Caucasus. These troops would be quite sufficient to stop anything that Dunsterville might attempt to do. Dunsterville had communicated, two days previously, a wireless message received from Baku which was to the effect that news received from Tiflis stated that the Armenian National Council had made peace with Turkey, had proclaimed itself the chief authority of the Armenian district, and had assumed, temporarily, the functions of government; that the period for the ratification of the treaty with Constantinople was one month; that, according to the treaty, Turkey had the right to move troops over the Trans-Caucasian railways; that Turkish troops were already moving along the road to Baku; and that, in accordance with the Treaty, Turkey would shortly begin to transfer troops by rail to Baku and Julfa. General Macdonogh said that all this information, if it were true, pointed to the concentration of German and Turkish troops near Baku, which meant that Dunsterville could do nothing. The first thing to do was to find out where the Caspian fleet was. On this point the Admiralty were, at present, unable to furnish any information, but General de Candolle thought it had gone north to the Volga. The fleet included two steamers with 4·7-inch guns and commercial steam tonnage to the amount of over 100,000 tons, a considerable amount of which consisted of tank steamers. If the Germans got hold of the fleet, which was last reported to be lying near Baku, they would shortly get to Krasnovodsk and to Enzeli. He was consulting the Admiralty as to sending mines to Enzeli, where we would possibly find some fishing boats which we could employ to lay them. He was also asking General Marshall if he could get up some 4·7-inch guns to Enzeli.

The Chairman said he thought it was important that an appreciation of the situation should be sent to Dunsterville, and that it should be also communicated to Mr. Macdonnell, as neither of these officials seemed fully acquainted with the exact position of affairs.

In reply to an enquiry from Lord Hardinge as to whether anything could be done to stop the German division getting to Krasnovodsk, the Chairman said that this could only be prevented by buying or sinking the Caspian fleet.

General Macdonogh said he would like the sanction of the Committee for instructions to be sent to General Dunsterville to destroy the oil reservoirs at Grozny and near Baku. He thought it would be possible for Dunsterville to send one or two officers who might make the necessary arrangements. The reservoirs were very nearly full at present owing to the fact that rolling-stock, &c., had not been available for its distribution. There were said to be 215,000,000 poods available for export at Baku. It would be impossible to destroy the actual oil wells, but it was most important to destroy the reservoirs, and also the 8-inch pipe lines from Baku to Batoum, and from Grozny to Petrovsk, as railways and shipping used oil fuel, and the demolition of the reservoirs would delay the German troops, who would have to bring oil from Constanza.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That the War Office should be asked to prepare, at once, an appreciation of the situation, and to send it to the G.O.C. Mesopotamia, with instructions to arrange that it should be communicated both to General Dunsterville and Mr. Macdonnell.*

(b.) *To approve the proposal to send 4.7-inch guns to Enzeli.*

(c.) *To approve the laying of mines outside Enzeli, if it were found practicable to do so.*

(d.) *That the War Office should inform the G.O.C. Mesopotamia of the enormous importance of getting hold of the Caspian fleet, should this prove in any way practicable.*

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(e.) *That the War Office should telegraph to the G.O.C. Mesopotamia, instructing him to tell General Dunsterville that he should arrange, if possible, to destroy the oil reservoirs and pipe lines at Grozny and at and near Baku.*

Caucasus: Hamadan–Kasvin Road.

2. The Director of Military Intelligence reported that, since the last meeting of the Committee, much had been done to push up troops on to the Hamadan–Kasvin line. At Manzil there were 100 Russians and 2 machine guns. Captain Wagstaff was at Zinjan with 61 officers and men, and 2 L.A. cars, and some irregulars. At Kasvin there were now Bicharakoff, with 3 field guns, 1 mountain gun, 6 machine guns, with personnel of 1,100, and also a squadron of the 14th Hussars, with a company of the Hampshire Regiment, and 2 L.A. cars. At Hamadan there were a platoon of the Hampshires, half a Ford-car column, 9 L.A. cars, and 3 aeroplanes, and it was proposed to raise 1,800 levies there. At Kermanshah there were half a Ford-car column, with personnel of 500, 2 platoons of the Hampshire Regiment, and a wireless station. Half the Ford-car column might be concentrated at Hamadan by the 12th instant, and as General Marshall had reported that he could reach Kasvin in 15 hours from Hamadan, it was possible that, exclusive of levies who would be used for the purpose of security, about 2,500 officers and men with 9 armoured cars, but practically no artillery, could be concentrated at Kasvin by about the 15th of this month. This meant that Teheran was now secure against a raid.

The Chairman regarded this information as most encouraging, and thought that what had been done reflected great credit upon General Marshall.

Mr. Keynes said that he wished to bring to the notice of the Committee a financial question connected with this road. On the 6th June, the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, had wired (X. 9305) that he had received a message from General Dunsterville to the following effect: that the Hamadan–Kasvin road and thence to Teheran to the east, and to Enzeli to the west, was owned by a Russian Road Company, whose income from tolls had practically ceased during the war. The road needed considerable repair, and the Company, before permitting Dunsterville to use it for military purposes, demanded payment. Dunsterville proposed to offer them 2,500 tomans a week on condition they kept it in thorough repair and allowed the troops the use of buildings on the road and of the telephone to Hamadan, Teheran, and Enzeli. Mr. Keynes said that the point was, whether we should ourselves look after the road or whether we should entrust its repair to a practically non-existent Company. He thought that, in the first instance, our agreement with the Company, if made, should not extend beyond two months, and that this period should not be extended unless Dunsterville was satisfied that the Company kept it properly repaired.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That General Dunsterville should draft a contract with the Road Company, and submit it to them for their approval before it was finally ratified.*

(b.) *That payment at the rate suggested by General Dunsterville should be authorised so long as that officer was satisfied that the repairs were properly carried out.*

(c.) *That General Dunsterville should report at the end of two months as to whether the Road Company were performing their share of the contract properly.*

(d.) *That the War Office should be asked to take the necessary action to give effect to the above.*

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Captain Wagstaff's Irregulars.

3. General Macdonogh said he wished to raise another question, namely, the amount of pay to be given to the irregular troops which Captain Wagstaff was now engaged in raising. At the present moment Wagstaff was between Zinjan and Mianeh. The pay suggested for these "irregulars" was 12 krans a day, which he did not regard as excessive having regard to the facts that the men had to feed themselves, and that the cost of living had increased very much. The Turks were paying their troops only 2 krans less, and they permitted them to loot villages. The English equivalent would amount to 8*s.* a day. We had no regular troops of any description in that region, but we were raising 5,000 irregulars, exclusive of the 1,800 levies in the Hamadan area.

The Chairman thought the Committee should proceed with caution. It seemed possible that this might develop into an independent military operation involving guerrilla warfare, and costing some 60,000*l.* a month.

Mr. Keynes pointed out this expense could be afforded provided that savings were effected in other directions. The Treasury could afford this amount if, as now seemed possible, the disappearance of Bicharakoff relieves them of a monthly expenditure of 4,000,000 krans. Their estimates, however, did not at present include the financing of our people on the road.

The Chairman regarded it as the inevitable result of the sanction already given to launch this force. He wondered whether India might not be asked to ease the financial burden by paying for a larger share of our expenses in Mesopotamia.

Mr. Montagu said that his Department and the Indian Government had under consideration the question of a new contribution from India to the cost of the war. Both the Viceroy and his chief financial adviser were, he understood, in favour of this. There had, however, recently been a big currency crisis and so the matter had not yet been brought before Parliament. India would certainly prefer that her contribution should go towards meeting the expenses in Mesopotamia, which was a real theatre of war, rather than those which we were incurring on our present policy in Persia.

Mr. Keynes said the question was largely not so much one of economy as of obtaining the necessary currency at all. Sir Charles Marling had wired, on the 9th June, to say that the chief manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia has informed him that sales of exchange were at a standstill. The bank depended on these sales to replenish its coffers for it could neither import silver nor get the consignment on hand minted. It could not, therefore, further impoverish its present cash position. The manager had further warned Marling that he might not be able to finance all the requirements of His Majesty's Government and that he had already been embarrassed by having to provide the heavy drawings on account of General Dunsterville, while he did not at present see how he could finance the prospective Meshed requirements for the purchase of cotton and wool, &c. Any forced sales of Exchange would lower rates ruinously. The manager concluded by repeating his previous proposal that krans should be minted in Bombay, and urging the immediate provision in that way of a currency reserve of krans at Baghdad. Mr. Keynes said he must warn the Committee that things were certainly serious when the Imperial Bank of Persia felt it was nearing the limits of its resources. As regards the proposal that krans should be minted at Bombay, he said that this was a very slow procedure, as it took three months to get them from Bombay to Teheran; moreover, the proposal was not acceptable to the India Office.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that, as a matter of fact, at the present time the mints in India were held up by want of silver for turning out rupees.

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The Committee decided—

(a.) *That it was very desirable that the financial requirements of Captain Wagstaff's irregular troops should be met, if possible;*

(b.) *That Mr. Keynes, as representing the Treasury, should inform his Department of the Committee's views, and that the Committee were anxious that the Treasury should enquire into the matter and inform the War Office if these requirements could be met.*

(c.) *That the proposed rate of pay (12 krans a day) was approved for the irregulars raised by General Dunsterville.*

Southern Persia: Sir P. Sykes.

4. The Chairman said that at the last meeting the Committee decided to recommend that two battalions should go to Bundar Abbas and not to Bushire. Sykes, on the other hand, contemplating an immediate but impossible advance, had pleaded that they should go to Bushire. The Commander-in-Chief in India, who appeared to have a correct view of the situation, had decided to send troops to both places. Our latest information was to the effect that two battalions with a field ambulance were due to arrive at Bushire on the 10th and 13th June; and that two squadrons of cavalry, three companies of Indian infantry, and one section of a mounted battery were to reach Bundar Abbas later in the month. Sykes wished the Bundar Abbas force to advance to Saidabad (which was 160 miles north of Bundar Abbas and 80 miles east of Lake Niriz) to secure the Kerman province and to protect the stores and supplies there. It appeared from his telegrams that Sir P. Sykes was in a disturbed and somewhat irritable frame of mind, perhaps because he felt his recent actions had laid him open to criticism, and that by way of defence he was inclined to shift the blame on to the Minister at Teheran.

Mr. Montagu said that he had received a private telegram from the Viceroy enquiring as to the effect upon the position of the Government of India of the arrangement by which Sykes had been placed under the Commander-in-Chief. Did that mean that he was under the Government of India or under the War Office, and was he under the Commander-in-Chief in India in his political capacity or as a military officer? The Viceroy welcomed the change, but while he was anxious to avoid raising any constitutional difficulty, he could not forget what had happened before in Mesopotamia as recorded in the Report of the Commission, and was anxious to have the position clearly defined.

The Chairman said that in arriving at the decision regarding Sykes, the Committee looked upon it as a purely military business; that is to say, they had decided that for military purposes, Sykes should be under the Commander-in-Chief in India.

General Macdonogh said that it was not the intention of the War Office that General Marshall should command either Sykes or at Shiraz. The control rested in the hands of Sir Charles Monro, who again would, he thought, be under the War Office.

Mr. Montagu pointed out some of the difficulties which would arise from this decision. The Commander-in-Chief was a member of the Viceroy's Council, but apparently Sykes was now responsible to the Commander-in-Chief, but not to the Indian Government; on the other hand, Mesopotamia was under the War Office. He suggested the best thing to do would be to send out a regular British soldier to conduct operations in South Persia, if the Committee felt that such operations were necessary.

General Macdonogh said that he hoped that the Committee would arrive at no decision at that meeting on this question, as he would like to consult the C.I.G.S. and obtain his views.

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The Committee decided—

That the discussion of this question should be adjourned in order that the views of the C.I.G.S. might be ascertained.

Our Policy in Persia.

5. Mr. Montagu said that all the subjects which had been discussed by the Committee that afternoon really hinged on the policy we proposed to pursue in Persia. If it was intended to transform Persia into a military area, in his opinion our present political and military machinery was quite inadequate. The Committee received political advice from Sir C. Marling, Sir P. Sykes, various consular officers, and the Government of India. These were often conflicting in their nature. He thought it desirable either that there should be one political channel of communication, or else that Persia should be made a main war area, in which case it would be necessary to send out a Commander-in-Chief to that country with an adequate force.

The Chairman said that he thought that the question of policy could not profitably be discussed by the Committee until a new Persian Government had been established, and it was possible to enter into relations with it.

Mr. Montagu said that he referred in particular to recent telegrams from Sir P. Sykes, and also to one from Sir C. Marling, suggesting *inter alia* that it might be necessary to disband the South Persia Rifles.

The Chairman said that this latter telegram was to him quite incomprehensible. As regards the position of Sir P. Sykes, he did not regard it as one which need cause them too much anxiety. This, however, was mainly a military question, and he left it to the military representatives on the Committee to say whether or not his opinion in this matter was correct.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office agreed with the view of the Commander-in-Chief, who had stated that it appeared to him that Sykes did not realise the effect of Soulet's recent defeat, or of Soulet's difficulties in keeping his force together.

Mr. Balfour, in reply to Mr. Montagu, thought that there was surely no intention of making Persia a main theatre of war! The Germans would certainly not worry about Southern Persia so long as they were free to exploit their projects in Central Asia.

The Chairman said that he believed that what Mr. Montagu wished to know was whether we were going to embark on considerable military operations in South Persia. The Committee were, he knew, anxious to avoid military commitments there.

Mr. Montagu said that it was impossible either to forecast what minor military operations might lead to or to set a limit to them. What had happened was that Sir P. Sykes had undertaken military operations against Soulet, who was said to be unreliable, but who had, at any rate, made out a fairly plausible case for protesting against these operations. Soulet said that he would not have foreign troops operating in his district. The trouble, of which he had given due warning, had been caused by the activities of the South Persia Rifles. Those activities were undoubtedly provocative to tribes in the south; then, in order to save the situation, we were asked to send impossible reinforcements. Our tendency was more and more to send out little military bands all over Persia, and embarrassing complications must be the inevitable result. We were to-day between two stools. It was very necessary for us to keep the Turks and Germans out of Persia, but we were endeavouring to control Persia without a force adequate for the purpose. In his opinion, our present indeterminate course courted disaster.

The Committee decided—

To take up at a future meeting the question of our policy in Persia.

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Koweit Blockade.

5. General Macdonogh said that he had circulated, just before the meeting, a paper (E.C.-512) on the subject of the Koweit blockade. The paper briefly summarised the situation. He would invite the particular attention of the Committee to the news which had been received from Egypt on the 22nd April, that about 5,000 camels with goods had arrived at Damascus from Koweit. The view of the General Officer Commanding, Egypt, was that it was most desirable that this traffic should be stopped, either by blockade or cordon. Then on the 3rd June the Political Agent at Baghdad had telegraphed that, in addition to the permit system for Koweit, it would be necessary to limit exports from India to other Gulf ports, as otherwise traffic would be simply diverted to Behrein or elsewhere. In the Political Agent's view, the only satisfactory solution would be to despatch troops, and he considered that a company would be sufficient. The same Political Agent, on the 4th June, had telegraphed to the effect that on the 3rd May the Sheikh of Koweit had sent a message and a letter to him asking the Government to overlook the past and promising his hearty co-operation in the future. The Sheikh agreed to be personally responsible for everything that happened in his country, and said he would eject all enemies from Government and be responsible for preventing goods going to the enemy. He further asked that the blockade officer should remain. General Macdonogh said that as the matter now stood the Political Agent at Koweit had been told that, as the Government were not prepared to send troops, he should inform the Sheikh that the substance of his letter had been communicated to the Government, who were giving it their friendly consideration, and that it was hoped that Sir P. Cox, who was now on his way back, would visit Koweit and communicate His Majesty's Government's decision to the Sheikh.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that, as regards the troops to be sent to Koweit for blockade purposes, it had first been suggested that a platoon should be despatched, later it had been proposed to send a battalion, and the present view seemed to be that a company would suffice. No Indian troops had been at Koweit during the war. He reminded the Committee that, as regards the suggestion that Sir P. Cox should communicate the Government's decision to the Sheikh, Cox might be delayed in Egypt. Before leaving England Sir P. Cox had told him that he was prepared to support the recommendation that troops should be sent to Koweit in order to stop goods percolating into Arabia, if this measure was considered necessary on military grounds. It seemed from the Political Agent's telegram of the 4th June that the Sheikh of Koweit was now prepared to co-operate effectively with us.

General Macdonogh said that it was only owing to the caravans passing from Koweit and passing through Hail that the garrison at Medina had been able to hold out so long.

Mr. Montagu thought that before the Committee arrived at a decision it might be well to ask Sir P. Cox to report on the situation on his arrival at Koweit.

The Committee agreed—

That it was inadvisable to wait until Sir P. Cox arrived at the Gulf, and decided that the War Office should be instructed to telegraph to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, explaining the circumstances, and asking him if he could spare, and was prepared to send, a company to Koweit for blockade purposes, should his political adviser think this necessary.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,*
June 11, 1918.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, June 18, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Palestine.

The King of the Hedjaz and the Anglo-French Agreement.

1. The Chairman said that the first question before the Committee arose out of a telegram from Sir Reginald Wingate, No. 948, dated the 16th June, 1918 (E.C.–556), stating that the King of the Hedjaz had apparently only just seen in the newspaper "Mostakbil," a report of the speech delivered by Jemal Pasha several days before the fall of Jerusalem, and had sent rather a violent telegram to his agent at Alexandria instructing him to make enquiries about the alleged Anglo-French Agreement and its scope. The telegram reminded the Foreign Office that the King had never been officially informed of the Sykes–Picot Agreement, and stated that the agent had asked him to suggest a suitable reply that could be sent to the King's telegram. Sir Reginald had advised the agent to say that the Bolsheviks found in the Petrograd Foreign Office a record of old conversations and of a provisional understanding (not a formal treaty) between Britain, France, and Russia, early in the war, to prevent difficulties between the Powers in prosecuting the war with Turkey; that Jemal, either from ignorance or malice, had distorted its original purpose; had omitted its stipulations regarding the consent of native populations and the safeguarding of their interests, and had ignored the fact that the subsequent outbreak and success of the Arab revolt and the withdrawal of Russia had, for a long time past, created a wholly different situation. Sir Reginald enquired whether he could add that we regarded the Agreement as

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dead for all practical purposes. The Chairman said that the Foreign Office had since replied to Sir Reginald (F.O. telegram No. 780, dated 18th June, 1918) in the following sense :—

> "With reference to your telegram No. 948 of the 16th June the question in the last sentence of your telegram will be considered immediately by the Eastern Committee; in the meantime you should impress upon the King's agent that Jemal delivered his speech in order to cause disunion among the Allies and had published it in the 'Mostakbil,' a paper whose policy had, in spite of the French Government's repeated warnings, consistently favoured French annexations."

Sir Mark Sykes said he had prepared a brief memorandum, which he handed to the Committee. In this memorandum he had pointed out that the King of the Hedjaz had frequently been given the outline and detail of the Agreement in question, both by himself, M. Picot, Colonel Bremond, and Commander Hogarth, who was specially sent down for the purpose; and it seemed almost incredible that this should be the first the King had heard of Jemal's speech, though it may be true that this was the first he had seen of the "Mostakbil" report thereof; that the facts that were affecting the King's mind probably were (1) the rumours that in Mesopotamia we were pursuing an annexationist policy; (2) the rumours that we have discussed peace terms, involving Turkey's tutelage over Arabs, with the Turks; (3) our partiality for Ibn Saud; (4) the French unwillingness and reluctance to adopt a pro-Arab policy instead of a sectarian policy; (5) our military set-backs east of the Jordan; (6) Jemal's intrigues, the last two items being the most important, and probably carrying the most weight; that he believed that we should inform the King that we should not approve of any settlement, in any area where the population is preponderantly Arab or Arabic speaking, which did not meet with the wishes of the people, and was not consonant with the principle of the consent of the governed; and, finally, if the French could join us in giving such assurances, it would be a great advantage. Sir Mark said that in the "Mostakbil" there had also recently been a leading article to the effect that Syria must be annexed to France. Two Persian agents had come to him in considerable alarm about this article. He had suggested that a further article should at once appear in the same paper putting the matter on the right lines.

The Chairman thought that what they wished to tell the King of the Hedjaz was that the old Agreement no longer applied; but before definitely stating so we should have to consult the French.

Mr. Balfour suggested adding "and the Italians."

Sir Mark Sykes thought that the King might be at once informed that, so far as we were concerned, the old Agreement no longer applied, subject to the concurrence of the French.

Lord Hardinge suggested that we should adopt the formula which had been accepted in the case of the Anglo-Russian Agreement in Persia and say that the Agreement was "temporarily in suspense."

General Smuts thought it inadvisable to make any statement about the Sykes-Picot Agreement, or, indeed, any large statement of policy.

The Chairman suggested that Sir Reginald Wingate should be informed that the British Government were satisfied with the assurances already given, but before making a further statement they felt the French Government must be consulted.

General Macdonogh pointed out that the whole matter had been threshed out last January, and said that on the 4th February a telegram (F.O. No. 163) had been sent to Sir Reginald asking that a message should be transmitted to King Hussein to the effect that the Government were touched by the readiness and frankness with

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which His Highness had caused to be forwarded to the High Commissioner and the Turkish Commander in Syria messages to Emir Feisal and to Giaffer Pasha, that the Turkish policy was evidently to sow distrust between the Arabs and the Powers of the *Entente* by suggesting to the former that the *Entente* Powers desired Arab territory, and to the latter that the Arabs could be diverted from their purpose of self-liberation; but that the words of intriguers were powerless to cause dissension between those whose minds were bent on a single purpose; that His Majesty's Government with their Allies stood for the cause of the liberation of oppressed nations, and were determined to stand by the Arab peoples in their attempt to reconstruct an Arab world in which Ottoman violence should once again be replaced by law, and unity substituted for the disastrous rivalries which Turkish officials promoted; and that His Majesty's Government reaffirmed their former pledges to His Highness in regard to the freeing of the Arab peoples.

Sir Mark Sykes said that he was quite sure that the King of the Hedjaz had, some months back, been fully informed of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and that he had now read it again in good Arabic and had feigned indignation. As regards the suggestion that the French were out for annexations, this had already been disavowed by M. Gout, speaking on behalf of the French Government.

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should be asked to send a further reply to Sir Reginald Wingate in the following sense:—

(a.) *That the Government approved of the instructions he had given to King Hussein's agent;*

(b.) *That the Government's instructions and policy had already been clearly indicated in the Foreign Office telegram to him of the 4th February;*

(c.) *That the larger issue could only be decided after consultation with the French Government.*

Policy in regard to Mohammedan Religion.

2. Sir Mark Sykes said that it appeared from a memorandum which had been written by Colonel Jacob and a recent telegram from General Clayton that the authorities in Egypt were inclined to proceed on the wrong lines in regard to policy in respect of the Mohammedan religion. There were also proposals afoot to start a Moslem Bureau. He had discussed the matter with Sir Ronald Graham, who agreed with him that it was desirable to get things on the right lines. He accordingly prepared a draft telegram, which he thought should be sent, if the Committee approved, to Sir R. Wingate.

Mr. Montagu doubted whether it were really necessary. It might have a bad effect on the Mohammedans in India, who at present were going through a rather bad time. All Colonel Jacob had urged in his memorandum was a more sympathetic treatment of Mohammedanism, and that, as Turkey was bound to survive the war, we should not shape our policy on the lines of too uncompromising hostility. The suggested reply indicated a complete religious toleration and a complete religious detachment, and any Mohammedan who saw it would regard it as most unsympathetic.

General Smuts said that, although the document might be perfectly right from a Western point of view, was it so from an Oriental's?

Mr. Montagu said this was exactly his point.

Mr. Balfour said that Colonel Jacob had "started a hare" of his own without provocation, and he saw no reason why we should pursue it.

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Sir Mark Sykes thought it desirable that the matter should be based on national and not pan-Islamic lines.

Mr. Montagu said he disapproved of pan-Islamism, but he deprecated doing anything which might give a handle to our enemies.

General Smuts agreed.

Mr. Balfour thought that if we were unconsciously indulging in pan-Islamic propaganda we ought to stop it at once. But would a pronouncement of religious toleration help us?

Sir Mark Sykes thought it might be better to mark the telegram "very confidential," and say that it was for the use of the High Commissioner and his chief subordinates only.

Mr. Balfour said he understood it was intended as a counter-blast to some policy which was being pursued in Egypt.

The Chairman explained that Colonel Jacob, a prominent officer of the Arab Bureau, who was immediately under the High Commissioner, had written a paper of the policy advocated, of which we disapproved, and Sir Mark Sykes had recommended that we should inform Sir R. Wingate accordingly.

Sir Mark Sykes said that it was necessary to correct a wrong impression in Egypt, where they wished to run King Hussein for the Khalifate.

Mr. Montagu said that, on this latter point, Sir R. Wingate was perfectly sound and absolutely opposed to it.

Sir Mark Sykes said that it would create mischief in India. It seemed clear that Colonel Jacob had some idea of making friends with the Turks. He himself only wished to see our policy there put on a proper basis, that is to say, not a religious but a national basis.

Mr. Balfour said he strongly deprecated setting out on paper our policy towards the Turks, the Turanians, the Arabs, &c.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That a communication to Sir R. Wingate should be made in the form of a private letter;*

(b.) *That the letter, which would be sent by the Foreign Office, should be drawn up, on the general lines suggested by Sir Mark Sykes, by the Foreign Office in consultation with the India Office;*

(c.) *That the draft of the letter should be sent to the Chairman before despatch.*

Baku and the Caucasus.

3. The Chairman said that the Committee's instructions to Mr. McDonnell had been to try and get hold of the Caspian fleet, which Mr. McDonnell had seemed confident he could do, or to destroy it. General Marshall had now forwarded the views of Colonel Jack (E.C.–569), who was at present at Baghdad. Colonel Jack had been over the Roumanian oil-fields and also had local knowledge of the oil-fields near Baku. Colonel Jack stated that the destruction of the oil-fields would cost about a hundred million pounds sterling on the basis of Roumanian claims; it would mean the shutting down of many industries and thereby create an effective base for hostile propaganda; stocks at Baku exceeded a million and a half tons, and could only be destroyed by agreement with the Bolsheviks and the Armenians, and would cause the livelihood of the inhabitants to cease. Colonel Jack thought, however, it would be possible to destroy the pumps and pipe-lines. In forwarding this information, General Marshall asked whether he could authorise compensation to be offered to the owners for losses sustained. General Marshall also said that he had no further information as to whether McDonnell had been able to send any shipping to Enzeli, but that on the 15th June, McDonnell

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had wired that the Bolsheviks had forbidden him to use the wireless station officially, and that he had been refused permission to proceed to Enzeli. General Marshall also forwarded a report, dated the 13th June, from General Dunsterville, which said that if Baku was held we should control the Caspian shipping, and there should be no difficulty in maintaining communications with Enzeli; he could not give a guarantee to supply Baku with ammunition, but he believed there was a good supply there; that he had no intention of keeping many troops in or near Enzeli, but only enough to guarantee the safety of the road until the Jangali situation was certain. General Dunsterville further reported that the Baku–Batoum Railway was in a bad state which would delay the hostile advance; that he understood that there were thirty-three guns now in efficient order at Baku, and if he could put 10,000 troops in action as promised, the Turko-German advance would be checked for many months; that the Armenians were fighting for their lives and would hold out to the last; and that if the situation proved to be better than he thought, he would have again to ask for troops. General Marshall's comment on this was that we should await the report of the British officer accompanying Bicharakoff, and he said that he had told Dunsterville that he did not intend to send him any more troops without permission from England, and had that day drawn his attention once more to the fact that Dunsterville could only send telegrams concerning operations and policy through the G.O.C., Mesopotamia. The Chairman said that this showed that Dunsterville still retained all his hopes of doing great things, but he now realised that he was not to get any troops. General Marshall was, he thought, taking quite the right line.

General Macdonogh said we never intended to destroy the oil-fields on the Roumanian scale; it was only a question of destroying the pipe-lines and the million and a half tons of oil in the reservoirs. The telegram which the Chairman had just read out was a reply to the War Office message of the 13th June, asking for a report on the destruction of the reservoirs. He had received information from a most reliable source to the effect that the Bolsheviks, even though they would not defend Baku, might set fire to the wells and pipe-lines as the Turks advanced. He did not think that there would be any necessity to compensate the owners, as it would be war damage. The same informant reported that the Tartars were said to be joining the Turks in order to loot Baku. As regards the thirty-three guns at Baku, only six were said to be efficient. The latest report from McDonnell, dated the 15th June, was not at all optimistic.

General Smuts remarked that McDonnell one day stated that he controlled the fleet, and the next that he could not even get to Enzeli. He agreed with General Macdonogh that it would not be necessary to compensate, as the destruction would be ordinary war damage. The position, however, was so frequently changing that he thought we had better await the report of the officer with Bicharakoff before issuing definite instructions.

(*At this point Mr. Montagu was called away from the meeting.*)

General Macdonogh agreed that nothing further could be done at present. The necessary instructions had been issued to General Marshall; we had refused to send troops to Baku; we allowed Dunsterville to send an officer or officers with Bicharakoff, and we had better now await the report of the officer with Bicharakoff.

Mr. Shuckburgh suggested that it might be possible for us to use submarines in the Caspian.

Lord Hardinge pointed out that the Caspian was far too shallow for submarine action, as he knew from his own experience.

General Macdonogh said that, in reply to his enquiry as to

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whether it would be possible to lay mine-fields at Enzeli, the Admiralty had reported—

(*a.*) It was hardly feasible, on account of the difficulties of transportation;
(*b.*) That it was unnecessary, as artillery would suffice to sink the fleet;
(*c.*) That, as regards hydroplanes, they would be useful to spot for our guns at Enzeli, but Baku was out of hydroplane range, unless the hydroplanes could be taken part of the way by sea.

Further definite information received by us was to the effect that two more German battalions and two batteries were on their way from Ukraine, that there was an enemy aerodrome at Tiflis, and also that the 3rd Turkish Army now advancing in the Caucasus was to be maintained at its full strength.

In reply to a question, Mr. Oliphant said that the journey from Baku to Enzeli took eighteen hours.

The Chairman stated that he had seen in the paper that morning that the Turks were at Tabriz. He thought a most discouraging fact was the changed attitude of the Bolsheviks. Lenin now said that he would oppose the landing of any British at Baku.

Mr. Balfour though the whole situation was most disquieting.

The Chairman said our almost hopeless position was due to two things—our lack of military strength, and geographical difficulties.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That their present instructions to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, should stand;*
(b.) *That General Marshall should be informed that we agreed with him that the report of the British officer with Bicharokoff should be awaited before those instructions were reconsidered.*

South Persia.

Position of Sir P. Sykes.

4. The Chairman said that in the absence of the Secretary of State for India he thought the discussion of Sir P. Sykes' position must be deferred. There were two points to be decided—one political and one military. There was some feeling between Sykes and Marling on account of the Political Officer at Shiraz, who was corresponding with Marling, Sir P. Sykes thought, behind the latter's back. The Committee had to determine the exact meaning of their instructions that Sykes should be placed under the Commander-in-Chief in India. He did not think this would be difficult, as Sykes would be under Sir Charles Monro for all military matters. Arising from this, however, there was, as Mr. Montagu said, a larger question, that of the military control of the whole of the operations. In the days of the Persian Committee the Government of India had proposed that an Indian General should be sent to command all the troops in South Persia. That Committee had not favoured the proposal, as it meant a fresh military area. Now, however, as military operations were actually taking place, and as Sykes had no recent military experience, it seemed evident that a military commander was necessary. Sir Charles Marling was right in his view that Sykes, as officer commanding the South Persia Rifles, was really a servant of the Persian Government.

General Macdonogh thought that the Chief of the Imperial Staff would probably agree to asking the Commander-in-Chief in India to send out an officer to command Persia with his head-

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quarters, possibly, at Bushire; the South Persia Rifles still, of course, remaining under Sykes.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *To defer the discussion of Sir P. Sykes' position until the Secretary of State for India could be present;*
(b.) *To ask the War Office and the India Office to prepare papers giving the views of those departments in regard to the question of general military control;*
(c.) *To meet again on the afternoon of Friday, the 21st instant.*

Bakhtiariland: The Kuhgelus.

General Macdonogh gave a short description of the recent operations of the Bakhtiaris whom we were supporting against the Kuhgelus. At present the Kuhgelus were receiving no assistance from the Kashgais.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
June 18, 1918.

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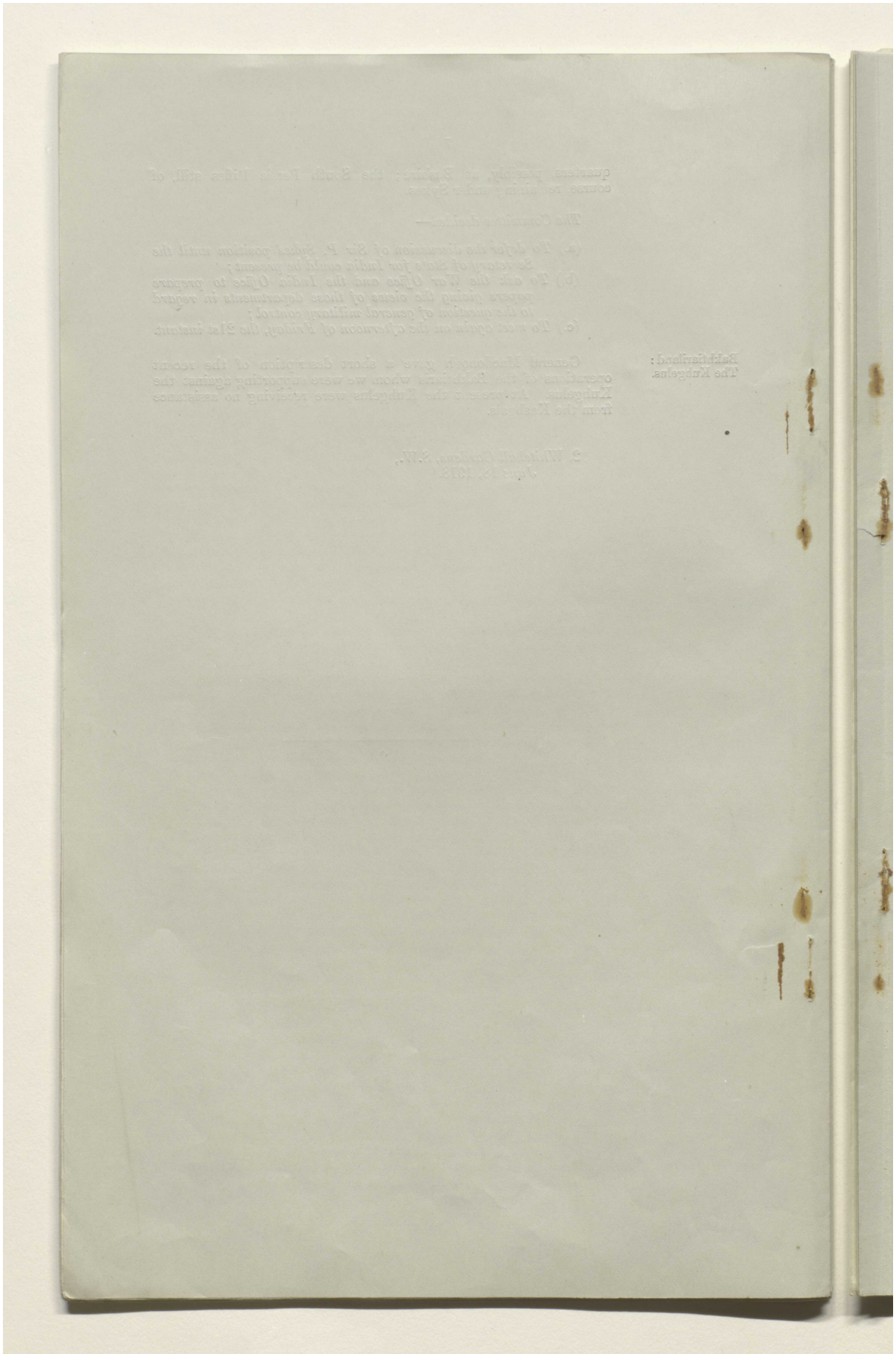

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Lord Curzon. (4)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. June 1918.

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E.C. 15th Minutes. 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Friday, June 21, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Our Liabilities in Persia.

Payments to Firman Firma and the Kawam.

1. The Chairman said Sir C. Marling had telegraphed on the 16th June (E.C.–564) that our consul at Shiraz had received a letter from Firman Firma, making the following requests:—

(*a.*) That the British Government should pay him compensation at the rate of 40,000*l.* a year for losses sustained owing to non-collection of revenue for the last three years from estates belonging to him and his five elder sons;

(*b.*) Will guarantee them that revenue as long as troubles continue;

(*c.*) Will guarantee the lives, honour, and their free enjoyment of property to himself and his family;

(*d.*) That in the event of his having to flee the country, and loss of his estates, the British Government will grant him property in British territory and private income equal to that lost;

(*e.*) That such increment be paid him and to his sons afterwards.

Sir C. Marling had suggested the following alternatives:—

(1.) 15,000*l.* down in respect of (*a*);

(2.) 3,000 tomans a month so long as he remains Governor of Fars;

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(3.) 3,000 tomans a month to his family in Teheran, of which 1,000 tomans to Firuz;
(4.) 40,000*l.* a year in case of exile, of which 10,000*l.* to Firuz.

The Chairman said that he thought Firman Firma's demands were quite preposterous. The alternatives had apparently been shown by Gough to Firman Firma, who objected to them as being inadequate. Gough had then strongly urged that the original proposal should be accepted without discussion.

Mr. Balfour said that as we had not enough troops in South Persia, he thought we must adopt the alternative of payments.

The Chairman said that Firman Firma had been a good friend to the British interests for some years; he was committed to our side, but his position was very difficult, and now in order to keep him straight we were asked to consent to a ridiculous bribe.

Lord Hardinge said that, so far as his department was concerned, the purely office point of view was that we might accept the first three alternative suggestions of Marling's, and also give Firman Firma a lump sum in lieu of the annual payment of 40,000*l.* a year, provided that we were given satisfactory guarantees in return.

The Chairman said that the losses of revenue from his property sustained by Firman Firma were really due to disorders in the country, and had nothing to do with us, so far as he could see.

Mr. Oliphant pointed out that most of Firman Firma's property lay in the north, and especially around Teheran, and he may have been unable to collect the revenue for some time. His great fear was that if he definitely came over to us and an unfriendly Persian Government came into power, he would be deprived of all his revenue.

Mr. Montagu said that he agreed with Mr. Balfour. If we wished to bribe him to remain on our side, we must be prepared to offer a sufficiently large bribe to secure his adherence. He thought, however, that if we offered a lump sum, he might actually seek exile. He suggested that Marling should be informed that he was at liberty, within certain limits, to negotiate with him.

The Chairman pointed out that he was already on our side, and said he did not see the necessity to pay him an excessive bribe now. We certainly might have to pay him if he actually lost either his estates or his Governorship, or were compelled to leave the country.

Mr. Oliphant said that unless we paid him we might lose our only asset in the province of Fars, which was the friendship of the Governor-General.

Mr. Keynes said it was impossible to give 40,000*l.* a year. It could not be done out of the Vote of Credit, and, as a recurring charge, it would have to come before Parliament; besides which, as Mr. Montagu pointed out, if we gave him this money, it would appear to be more lucrative for him to abdicate than to remain. He suggested offering him some monthly sum so long as he acted on our side. He strongly advised against giving a lump sum, and stated that his department would sooner pay in sterling than in tomans.

General Smuts said, to guarantee the lives, honour, and free enjoyment of property to Firman Firma and his family was an entirely undefined claim, and, moreover, a preposterous demand. So far, Firman Firma had not been actively assisting us with forces; he had merely given his blessing to the South Persia Rifles.

The Chairman suggested that Marling should be informed that we cannot decide about compensation without further information, but that he might be offered, say, 2,000*l.* a month so long as he remained—(*a*) Governor-General of Fars, and (*b*) friendly to us.

Mr. Keynes thought that we should only offer this monthly payment for the period of the war.

The Chairman said as regards the remaining items, we might say that, if his estates were confiscated or he had to go into exile,

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we would take these questions into consideration if, and when, these events occurred.

Mr. Montagu then read a draft of a telegram to Sir C. Marling, which he had just written down.

Mr. Balfour said that all lump sums were open to the disadvantage that the man who received them might not "deliver the goods."

Mr. Montagu suggested that discretion should be given to Marling and Gough to negotiate, within certain financial limits, whether it was decided to give a lump sum or to make monthly payments.

Mr. Keynes said that his department could not view with equanimity the proposal to give Marling and Gough a free hand.

Mr. Balfour said that he agreed with the Chairman that Firman Firma might be bribed with an annual sum, but that we wanted more information about his estates.

Mr. Oliphant reminded the Committee that the question of the payment of Firman Firma had been raised by the latter last February, when he was apprehensive of an advance on the capital.

The Committee decided—

To ask the Foreign Office to telegraph to Sir C. Marling in the following sense :—

(a.) *That until they were in possession of fuller information as to the extent and value of Firman Firma's estates and his alleged loss of revenue therefrom, His Majesty's Government are unable to determine what compensation, if any, should be offered or promised to him. They would, however, be prepared, in the event of his losing his estates on account of his friendship with us, to give that matter their consideration.*

(b.) *That Firman Firma and his family may be granted a monthly allowance, not exceeding 6,000 tomans for the period of the war only, so long as he remains (i) Governor-General of Fars, (ii) friendly to us.*

The Chairman said that on the 18th June Marling had telegraphed (E.C.-572) to say that the consul at Shiraz had informed him that the Kawam-ul-Mulk had asked for an understanding on the following points :—

(a.) That the British Government would guarantee to reimburse him for the money losses sustained as a result of his openly declaring for us ;

(b.) That the same assurance should hold good for his heirs if he were killed or died ;

(c.) That the British Government would, in case of his enforced exile, compensate him for his losses.

These demands the consul considered as not more than reasonable, and thought that his active assistance would be well worth the price ; he also stated that the Kawam-ul-Mulk was awaiting our reply before ordering his Arabs to declare war against Soulet.

Mr. Oliphant explained that the Kawam was the Ilkhani of the Khamseh Arab tribe as opposed to Soulet, the Ilkhani of the Kashgais. He himself was disposed to support this claim, and suggested that the Treasury should be asked to fix a sum, and that the consul should be told not to exceed it.

Mr. Keynes said that as regards this claim we had absolutely no data to go upon. He urged that we must limit the financial assistance we gave, to very important people only. He thought, in

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the first instance, the consul should be told that his telegram, as it stood, was not understood.

Mr. Montagu thought the Committee should certainly promise the Kawam or his heirs an allowance on the same lines as had been proposed in the case of Firman Firma.

The Chairman agreed, and suggested that a telegram should be sent in the following sense :—

> "We cannot agree to grant compensation for unknown losses, but if we can be satisfied that certain losses have been definitely sustained, we would consider the question, and that in the event of his enforced exile we would grant compensation to him, and, in case of his death in our cause, to his family."

The Committee decided—

To request the Foreign Office to telegraph to Sir C. Marling to the effect that—

(a.) *His Majesty's Government cannot commit themselves to giving compensation for losses to an unlimited amount, but they were prepared to consider the question if and when such losses are incurred, provided that the Kawam remains friendly to us and that the losses sustained are on account of his friendship with us;*

(b.) *In the event of the Kawam's enforced exile, such reasonable compensation as may be decided upon will be paid to him; and*

(c.) *In the event of his death in our cause, to his family.*

The Committee further decided—

That the expenses of any subsidies it might be decided to give to Firman Firma and the Kawam should be borne in equal shares by the Indian Government and His Majesty's Treasury.

(At this point Mr. Keynes withdrew.)

South Persia.

The Position of Sir P. Sykes and the Control of Military Operations.

2. The Chairman said that the question of Sir P. Sykes' position and the control of military operations in South Persia was part of a larger question of the control of all military operations in Persia. An hour or two before the meeting, a memorandum on the subject of Sir P. Sykes' position by the Political Department of the India Office (E.C.-582), in which the Secretary of State for India had informed him he did not concur, had been circulated to the Committee. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff had also prepared a note (E.C. 591) on the proposed appointment of a General Officer Commanding South Persia, but this had been received too late to be read either by himself or the Committee. As regards the larger question, and speaking as one who had at different times viewed the problem both from the India Office and Foreign Office points of view, and also as Viceroy of India, the position seemed to him to be as follows. The expedition into Mesopotamia had originally been undertaken by the Government of India, but circumstances had necessitated the conduct of the operations being transferred to the War Office. Under the control of that department both the present General Officer Commanding in that theatre and his predecessor had worked splendidly. General Marshall had lately been compelled to throw out his right flank into Persia. The Chairman thought that General Marshall was well qualified to control the operations conducted by General Dunsterville, which were within his legitimate sphere,

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and these he considered should continue to be under the War Office. The control, however, of operations and Missions in Transcaspia and Meshed, and towards Central Asia, which seemed also to be drifting into the hands of the War Office, he was disposed to think fell more properly under the Indian Government. That that Government were evidently of the same opinion was shown by the fact that they had, in the course of the last day or two, held up certain instructions which had been issued by the War Office, after a Conference on Eastern Affairs, held under the direction of the Prime Minister at 10, Downing Street, the previous Monday, to Major Redl to endeavour to interrupt the Transcaspian Railway. His own view was that this particular theatre should not be under the War Office but under the Indian Government. It had been agreed at the end of last meeting of the Committee that the question of Sir P. Sykes should be held over until the Secretary of State for India could be present. He understood that the Committee were in agreement that the operations in South Persia should be under a separate military commander, and had accepted the principle that Sykes was not competent to command any considerable military force.

Mr. Montagu said that he was not present when this agreement was arrived at by the Committee, and he did not concur in it for reasons which he would explain presently.

The Chairman said it remained to be settled whether the officer in chief command in South Persia should be under General Marshall or under the Commander-in-Chief in India. He was inclined to think that the latter would be the better arrangement. The position presented this anomaly:—

1. That Sykes commanded a Persian force which was not recognised by the Persian Government.
2. That he also had certain regular Indian troops under his command.
3. That he was also a political officer, whose views were sometimes at variance with those of his political chief, namely, our Minister at Teheran.

He, himself, thought that if a new military commander were sent from India, he should be instructed to consult Sykes whenever he thought it necessary or desirable that the South Persia Rifles should co-operate with the troops under his own command.

General Macdonogh said that the Chairman's view was almost identical with that held by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff; and, further, that he had been under the impression that at the last meeting it had been decided that a new commander should be appointed for South Persia.

The Chairman said that it had been recorded in the minutes of the last meeting that the consideration of this question should stand over until Mr. Montagu could be present.

General Macdonogh said that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff's view was that a British General should be sent over to South Persia to command the troops in that area, but should be directly under the Commander-in-Chief in India, and direct operations under the orders of the Indian Government; that he should not command the South Persia Rifles, and that General Marshall should be responsible for Dizful, Shustar, and the Hamadan road.

The Chairman suggested that in that case Bakhtiariland should also be within General Marshall's sphere.

Mr. Oliphant thought that there would be no objection to this proposal on the part of the Foreign Office.

Mr. Montagu said that if the hypothesis on which the Committee was working were accepted he agreed, but that now that pressure could be exerted upon the Persian Government by our holding the Hamadan–Kasvin line he thought we must either form an alliance with that Government or regard Persia as a military

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area. By our present action, we were neither getting Persia on our side, nor were we pursuing a sufficiently active policy against her. If we failed to get a Persian Government to ally itself with us, then we might have to send troops to South Persia. Our troubles there were mainly political. What was needed was unification and decentralisation. He, himself, would abolish Sir C. Marling's appointment, and place political activities in Persia under the Indian Government. He did not think it was possible to split up Persia as had been suggested by the Chairman. He agreed, however, to the control of the Hamadan road and of Dunsterville's operations being retained by General Marshall. For the rest, he did not think that the present proposal went far enough.

The Chairman said that his proposal was only intended to deal with the situation as it now was. The trouble and confusion in South Persia were due to the fact that Sykes and the South Persia Rifles were shut up in Shiraz, and it was because of this military danger that we had had to send troops to Bundar Abbas and Bushire. For the moment it was this danger that had to be met.

General Smuts said that he was in favour of leaving Sykes in charge of the South Persia Rifles. He agreed that General Marshall's campaign was now being deflected into Persia, and he would accordingly put the Hamadan road, and Ahwaz, Dizful, and Bakhtiariland, under that General. As regards the question whether the military command in South Persia should be under General Marshall or the Indian Government, he thought there was much to be said on both sides, but he inclined to the latter solution. He agreed with Mr. Montagu that our troubles there were political in their character. He also agreed with the Chairman that the larger question could not properly be settled until the present mess had been cleaned up.

(*At this point General Smuts was summoned away from the meeting.*)

The Chairman pointed out that at present we had not in Persia a Government friendly to us. His view had been that if, and when, Vossugh became Prime Minister, we might either disband, or hand over to the Persian Government, the South Persia Rifles after (*a*) we were free from the present anxiety, and (*b*) we had a friendly Government in power.

Mr. Montagu said that if Marling were told to say that given a friendly Government we would disband or hand over the South Persia Rifles, he believed that Vossugh would form a Government and our troubles with Soulet would be over.

Mr. Oliphant said that he had been told by the Persian Minister that if we showed our willingness either to disband, or to let the Persian Government do exactly what they liked with, the South Persia Rifles, very great improvement in our position in the country might be expected.

The Chairman pointed out the danger of 6,000 armed and disbanded men wandering about in South Persia.

General Macdonogh said that it was particularly necessary that they should not be allowed to get into the hands of Wassmuss.

Mr. Montagu suggested that one point of the bargain should be the suppression of Wassmuss's activities. Further, we would make a promise that we would hand over the South Persia Rifles on condition that a Government friendly to us was formed. He was most unwilling to appear obstructive, but he must point out that once troops were brought up towards Shiraz, it would be most difficult to reinforce them. He thought that we should start negotiations with the Persian Government before we moved any troops.

Lord Hardinge said that he agreed with Mr. Montagu and thought that negotiations should precede any movement of troops.

The Chairman said that if we were to negotiate we must be sure of getting the right Prime Minister in power.

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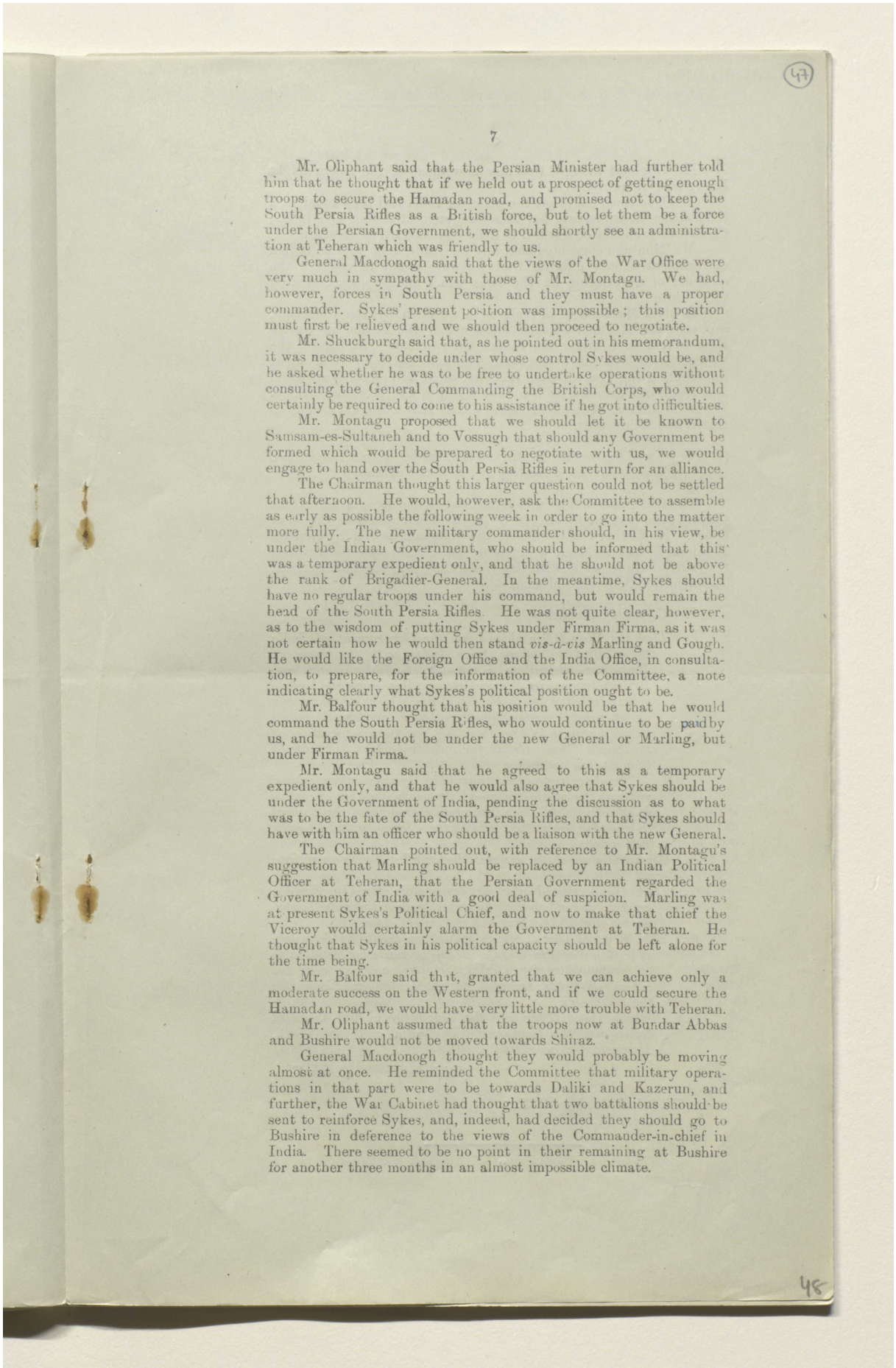

Mr. Oliphant said that the Persian Minister had further told him that he thought that if we held out a prospect of getting enough troops to secure the Hamadan road, and promised not to keep the South Persia Rifles as a British force, but to let them be a force under the Persian Government, we should shortly see an administration at Teheran which was friendly to us.

General Macdonogh said that the views of the War Office were very much in sympathy with those of Mr. Montagu. We had, however, forces in South Persia and they must have a proper commander. Sykes' present position was impossible; this position must first be relieved and we should then proceed to negotiate.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that, as he pointed out in his memorandum, it was necessary to decide under whose control Sykes would be, and he asked whether he was to be free to undertake operations without consulting the General Commanding the British Corps, who would certainly be required to come to his assistance if he got into difficulties.

Mr. Montagu proposed that we should let it be known to Samsam-es-Sultaneh and to Vossugh that should any Government be formed which would be prepared to negotiate with us, we would engage to hand over the South Persia Rifles in return for an alliance.

The Chairman thought this larger question could not be settled that afternoon. He would, however, ask the Committee to assemble as early as possible the following week in order to go into the matter more fully. The new military commander should, in his view, be under the Indian Government, who should be informed that this was a temporary expedient only, and that he should not be above the rank of Brigadier-General. In the meantime, Sykes should have no regular troops under his command, but would remain the head of the South Persia Rifles. He was not quite clear, however, as to the wisdom of putting Sykes under Firman Firma, as it was not certain how he would then stand *vis-à-vis* Marling and Gough. He would like the Foreign Office and the India Office, in consultation, to prepare, for the information of the Committee, a note indicating clearly what Sykes's political position ought to be.

Mr. Balfour thought that his position would be that he would command the South Persia Rifles, who would continue to be paid by us, and he would not be under the new General or Marling, but under Firman Firma.

Mr. Montagu said that he agreed to this as a temporary expedient only, and that he would also agree that Sykes should be under the Government of India, pending the discussion as to what was to be the fate of the South Persia Rifles, and that Sykes should have with him an officer who should be a liaison with the new General.

The Chairman pointed out, with reference to Mr. Montagu's suggestion that Marling should be replaced by an Indian Political Officer at Teheran, that the Persian Government regarded the Government of India with a good deal of suspicion. Marling was at present Sykes's Political Chief, and now to make that chief the Viceroy would certainly alarm the Government at Teheran. He thought that Sykes in his political capacity should be left alone for the time being.

Mr. Balfour said that, granted that we can achieve only a moderate success on the Western front, and if we could secure the Hamadan road, we would have very little more trouble with Teheran.

Mr. Oliphant assumed that the troops now at Bundar Abbas and Bushire would not be moved towards Shiraz.

General Macdonogh thought they would probably be moving almost at once. He reminded the Committee that military operations in that part were to be towards Daliki and Kazerun, and further, the War Cabinet had thought that two battalions should be sent to reinforce Sykes, and, indeed, had decided they should go to Bushire in deference to the views of the Commander-in-chief in India. There seemed to be no point in their remaining at Bushire for another three months in an almost impossible climate.

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Mr. Oliphant thought that any movement of the troops might be regarded as provocative.

The Chairman said that the policy of India had been to adopt a conciliatory attitude, and he, therefore, suggested that the Indian Government should be advised to defer any forward movement.

Mr. Montagu suggested that any telegrams sent to the Indian Government should indicate that we were about to consider the question of negotiating on the lines which had been suggested by the Viceroy.

General Macdonogh, in reply to a question by the Chairman, said that the Malleson-Meshed Mission and the cordon in North-East Persia were under the Indian Government. As regards the instructions which his department had sent to Major Redl about interrupting the Transcaspian Railway, these had been despatched as a result of a decision by the War Cabinet the previous Monday. The main interest of the War Office was to have a line extending to Enzeli and facing west.

(It was pointed out that the Meeting on Monday had been a Conference only and not a Meeting of the War Cabinet.)

The Chairman said he understood the Committee to agree that Central Asia was, in future, to be under India and not the War Office. He further remarked that the telegram issued by General Macdonogh had included a reference to certain questions which really had nothing to do with the War Office, *e.g.*, the Bolsheviks at Tashkent and Malleson's Mission.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That the War Office should ask the Government of India to appoint an officer from India with the rank of Brigadier-General to command all Indian and any British troops in South Persia. His command would not include the South Persia Rifles, which would remain as at present under Sykes as Inspector-General, but it would be open to him to apply for the co-operation of the South Persia Rifles for military action whenever he thought this necessary.*

The above arrangement should be regarded as provisional pending the consideration of the whole question of policy in Persia, which His Majesty's Government were about to consider, when the views of the Viceroy would be given full weight.

(b.) *That India should be responsible for all military operations in South Persia.*

(c.) *That India should also be responsible for the Eastern cordon, for all operations from Meshed towards Transcaspia and Turkestan, and in Central Asia.*

(d.) *That General Dunsterville's operations should be definitely placed under the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, who would also be responsible for Dizful, Shustar, and, as now, the Ahwaz oil-fields, and also for all military relations with the Bakhtiari.*

(e.) *That the India Office and the War Office should be asked to inform the Government of India and the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, accordingly.*

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
June 21, 1918.

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Lord Curzon. (48)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. July 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 16th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Mr. Balfour's Room at the House of Commons on Monday, June 24, 1918, at 3·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., *(in the Chair)*.

Lieut.-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE, OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, Treasury.

Mr. J. B. CROSLAND, Director of Finance, War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR *(Secretary)*.

The Hamadan Board of Control.

1. General Macdonogh briefly described (E.C.-615) the genesis and functions of the Hamadan Board of Control, which sat at Hamadan and consisted of one Russian member and one or two representatives of Sir C. Marling and a British Staff Officer attached to Bicharakoff. The expenditure on the Russian troops in Persia had hitherto been controlled by the Board, and in the event of it being decided that the Board should be dissolved it was desired that the position of the War Office with regard to this expenditure should be defined, for it was assumed that the functions of the Board would devolve upon the Military Authorities in Persia. The War Office had not hitherto undertaken any financial responsibility in Persia beyond that involved in the maintenance of British troops in that country. On the 17th May, the Board had recommended its own abolition, and this recommendation was supported by the Treasury, by the Minister at Teheran, and the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia.

The Committee decided:

That the Hamadan Board of Control should be abolished, and that the Foreign Office should be asked to take the necessary action to give effect to this decision.

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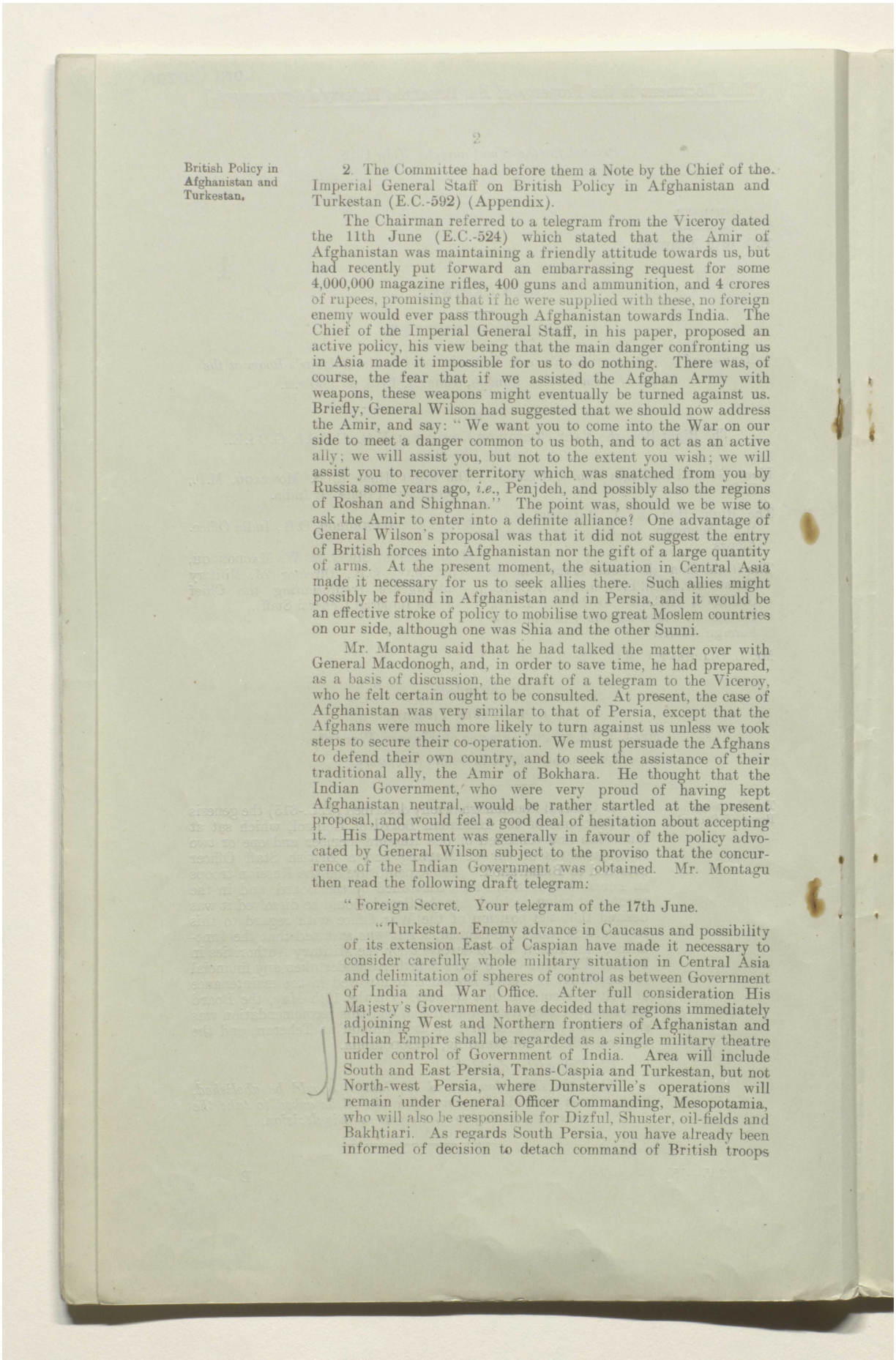

British Policy in Afghanistan and Turkestan.

2. The Committee had before them a Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on British Policy in Afghanistan and Turkestan (E.C.-592) (Appendix).

The Chairman referred to a telegram from the Viceroy dated the 11th June (E.C.-524) which stated that the Amir of Afghanistan was maintaining a friendly attitude towards us, but had recently put forward an embarrassing request for some 4,000,000 magazine rifles, 400 guns and ammunition, and 4 crores of rupees, promising that if he were supplied with these, no foreign enemy would ever pass through Afghanistan towards India. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, in his paper, proposed an active policy, his view being that the main danger confronting us in Asia made it impossible for us to do nothing. There was, of course, the fear that if we assisted the Afghan Army with weapons, these weapons might eventually be turned against us. Briefly, General Wilson had suggested that we should now address the Amir, and say: "We want you to come into the War on our side to meet a danger common to us both, and to act as an active ally; we will assist you, but not to the extent you wish; we will assist you to recover territory which was snatched from you by Russia some years ago, *i.e.*, Penjdeh, and possibly also the regions of Roshan and Shighnan." The point was, should we be wise to ask the Amir to enter into a definite alliance? One advantage of General Wilson's proposal was that it did not suggest the entry of British forces into Afghanistan nor the gift of a large quantity of arms. At the present moment, the situation in Central Asia made it necessary for us to seek allies there. Such allies might possibly be found in Afghanistan and in Persia, and it would be an effective stroke of policy to mobilise two great Moslem countries on our side, although one was Shia and the other Sunni.

Mr. Montagu said that he had talked the matter over with General Macdonogh, and, in order to save time, he had prepared, as a basis of discussion, the draft of a telegram to the Viceroy, who he felt certain ought to be consulted. At present, the case of Afghanistan was very similar to that of Persia, except that the Afghans were much more likely to turn against us unless we took steps to secure their co-operation. We must persuade the Afghans to defend their own country, and to seek the assistance of their traditional ally, the Amir of Bokhara. He thought that the Indian Government, who were very proud of having kept Afghanistan neutral, would be rather startled at the present proposal, and would feel a good deal of hesitation about accepting it. His Department was generally in favour of the policy advocated by General Wilson subject to the proviso that the concurrence of the Indian Government was obtained. Mr. Montagu then read the following draft telegram:

"Foreign Secret. Your telegram of the 17th June.

"Turkestan. Enemy advance in Caucasus and possibility of its extension East of Caspian have made it necessary to consider carefully whole military situation in Central Asia and delimitation of spheres of control as between Government of India and War Office. After full consideration His Majesty's Government have decided that regions immediately adjoining West and Northern frontiers of Afghanistan and Indian Empire shall be regarded as a single military theatre under control of Government of India. Area will include South and East Persia, Trans-Caspia and Turkestan, but not North-west Persia, where Dunsterville's operations will remain under General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, who will also be responsible for Dizful, Shuster, oil-fields and Bakhtiari. As regards South Persia, you have already been informed of decision to detach command of British troops

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from that of Soper and to place former under general officer responsible to Government of India. It has also been decided that Meshed and Kashgar missions shall remain under control of Your Excellency's Government and not of War Office.

"His Majesty's Government will be glad to receive as soon as possible Your Excellency's views as to further measures of military precaution in sphere allotted to you. As regards Afghanistan, question arises whether, in view of enemy menace, we can rely any longer on policy hitherto so successful of treating country as neutral enclave in war area. If not, and if necessity of protecting Afghanistan against enemy encroachment is admitted, requisite action can only be taken by Afghans themselves. Do you think it feasible in these circumstances to invite immediate co-operation of Amir with a view to committing him definitely on our side before we are forestalled by enemy? Invitation for which his recent request for arms gives pretext, might take form of offer of arms, etc. for defence of his Northern frontier and of suggestion that he should form defensive alliance with Amir of Bokhara for purpose of resisting enemy aggression. In any case, His Majesty's Government think it essential that our means of information regarding affairs in Turkestan should be improved and that with this object prohibition of entry of British Agents into country should now be withdrawn. Please instruct Malleson and Redl accordingly and authorise them at their discretion to send agents across frontier for purpose of obtaining information and paving way for despatch of regular Mission hereafter."

The Chairman suggested that in the 9th and 10th lines for "Area will include South and East Persia" should be substituted "In addition to South Persia already assigned to you, the area will be, etc."

(This was agreed to.)

Mr. Balfour enquired who had prohibited British agents going to Bokhara.

Mr. Montagu replied that instructions to this effect had been issued by the Indian Government and had been approved by H.M. Government.

Lord Hardinge pointed out that nothing appeared in the telegram about the suggestion regarding Afghanistan and Penjdeh.

The Chairman was inclined to think that the telegram contained too much in a single compass. First, it defined all the areas and delimitation of spheres of control. Secondly, it referred to Afghanistan, but did not state a programme that we should submit to the Amir. This latter, he thought, might be sent in a private telegram, proposing that it should be suggested to the Amir that he should try and recover Penjdeh; and, further, hint at Roshan and Shighnan. Thirdly, he thought it doubtful, at this stage, whether we should suggest that our missions should be allowed to proceed. We ought first to ascertain what the attitude of the Amir would be. India had always been most apprehensive whenever it had been suggested to send missions into Turkestan. It would be a pity if our new policy were handicapped by a bad start.

Mr. Montagu said it was difficult to say which policy should come first. If we brought in the Afghans, this might influence the Turkomans and others. On the other hand, if we managed to placate the Turkomans and the rest, this might impress the Afghans. In any case, we did want to ascertain the attitude of the peoples in Turkestan.

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The Chairman said that there were proposals to send missions to Central Asia, Trans-Caspia, to Bokhara (which was quite a different proposition), Russian Turkestan, and Chinese Turkestan. Just at the time we proposed to invite the Amir to come in on our side, it was proposed to send a mission to Bokhara before the Amir had time to make up his mind about our suggestion.

Lord Hardinge suggested that the Meshed Mission might be instructed to move in a westerly direction into Turkoman country, in order to prepare for the destruction of the railway, which was their main object.

The Chairman pointed out that this was not India's idea. They wanted the mission to move east to Bokhara, and eventually to Tashkent.

General Macdonogh explained that the original idea was to send a mission to Meshed corresponding to Dunsterville's mission to Tiflis, to work up the friendly elements in Transcaspia. Now, besides the destruction of the railway, we very much needed *(a)* information about the Orenburg—Tashkent railway; *(b)* information about the Austrian and German prisoners—whether they were being armed, &c.

The Chairman said that he was apprehensive of anything which touched the borders of Afghanistan, and he was afraid that the mission might drift into negotiations with Bokhara and Khiva. As, however, we had handed over the whole of this area to India, we must give the Indian Government the opportunity of reconsidering their views.

Mr. Montagu invited the Committee to refer to the following words which occurred on the second page of General Wilson's Memorandum:—

> "The Government of India are diffident about formulating any definite course of action. Let the War Cabinet decide, for such diffidence is the highway to inaction and defeat."

It was those words which had made him try to give a lead to India.

The Chairman said the proposed policy was an alliance with Afghanistan, and an indispensable feature of this policy was the despatch of missions. We must, however, await the views of the Indian Government, both on the policy and on the missions.

Mr. Balfour said he was inclined to agree, but it was more an India Office than a Foreign Office question.

Lord Hardinge thought that it would be much easier to carry out our policy in regard to Afghanistan if we first secured an ally in Persia.

General Smuts enquired whether the Committee was to settle the policy of India; or were they merely to make suggestions and to leave India to formulate its own policy?

The Chairman pointed out that the Viceroy of India and his Government were in these matters advisers to the Home Government, and that in the last resort it rested with the latter to decide.

Mr. Montagu thought that the present position was somewhat different, as it was proposed to give India the control of military operations in that area.

Mr. Balfour said that the practice was that the Home Government did not issue any instructions without first consulting India, just as India took no initiative without first referring home.

Mr. Montagu suggested that he should re-draft the telegram, and submit his draft to the Chairman.

Mr. Balfour said that the proposal was to get the Amir in on our side by promising him territory. He felt this to be a rather "strong order," as the territory in question was Russian.

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He reminded the Committee that we abused the Germans for dismembering Russia, and yet it appeared we proposed to do something of the same sort ourselves.

The Chairman said that in the complete collapse of Russian rule in Central Asia the territory in question was at present no-man's land.

Lord Hardinge said that the territory only a few years ago had belonged to Afghanistan.

General Smuts suggested that it might be called a "disannexation," and thought that perhaps the telegram to India should raise the points made by General Wilson more specifically.

Mr. Montagu said that he had deliberately omitted the definite points of General Wilson's note. As regards the question of Russian territory, he wished to know whether our Government were pro-Bolshevik or anti-Bolshevik.

Mr. Balfour said that, if the best elements in the Russian population asked us to assist them against the Germans, and we then took a large slice of Russian territory and handed it over to Afghan sovereignty, after protesting we would never do this, he thought it would be difficult for us to justify our action.

The Chairman thought we had been trying to do the same thing in Siberia—it was pretty certain that if the Japanese went into Siberia they would remain there.

Mr. Balfour did not agree. If, however, the Allies did not go into Siberia at the same time as Japan, the latter country might go in alone and say that she meant to stay.

The Chairman said that what we were trying to do was to set up a Moslem nexus of States to stop the German and Turkish advance. Was it, in the circumstances, wrong on our part to encourage the Afghans to recover territory which had been filched from them years ago?

Mr. Montagu suggested the point might be saved if it were put in the form of a question, *e.g.*, "as regards Afghanistan, would it encourage the Amir, &c., &c."?

Mr. Balfour said the view of his department was that the proposed policy could not be allowed to mature until the whole Russian question had been reviewed. No doubt Russia had no right to Penjdeh. He thought it impossible to accompany a great movement towards rehabilitating states, which had suffered in the war, with such an appropriation of territory. Moreover, he was not very happy about a suggestion that had been made as to a temporary military occupation of Penjdeh. He thought we could hardly ask the Afghans to go there and then to relinquish it.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that we were already proposing to destroy Russian property, *i.e.*, the Trans-Caspian Railway. Further, it would not be we who would occupy Russian territory, but the Afghans.

The Committee decided:

(a.) To ask Mr. Montagu to re-draft his telegram, and to submit it to the Chairman, putting the reference to Afghanistan in the form of a question.

(b.) That the telegram should go in three parts, one of which should deal with the sphere of control to be allotted to India, a second with Afghanistan, and a third with Missions.

Our Policy in Persia.

3. Mr. Montagu said that he could put his proposal in a very few words. On the one hand, if Persia was to be regarded as hostile to us, our policy there, from a military point of view, was not strong and active enough. On the other, it was too active if we were to have any chance of getting Persia to come in as an ally. As our man-power position was weak, he suggested that we should get Persia on our side in order to reduce our military commitments

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in that country. The position to-day was that the Persian Government was changing, that we found great difficulty in reinforcing our troops, and that the tribes were rendered restless by the presence of our troops as well as by enemy agents. We had now strengthened our Hamadan cordon and he proposed that we should tell Teheran that, if a Persian Government would come in as our ally to the extent of keeping out Turkish forces and removing German agents, we would not concern ourselves any more with the South Persia Rifles; we would strengthen our cordon and give Persia all the assistance we could. He invited the Committee to refer to a paper by Mr. Oliphant (E.C.-526) recording an interesting conversation with the Persian Minister. He had in his hand the draft of a telegram prepared at the Foreign Office, and based on that conversation. He had three comments to make upon this draft: first, that Marling should let it be known in Teheran that we were ready to enter into negotiations with any friendly Persian Government about the South Persia Rifles. He himself maintained that we could obtain a Government friendly to us by declaring our readiness to hand over the force at once. Secondly, there was nothing in the draft about an alliance; and thirdly, nothing was said about the expulsion of Wassmuss. He maintained that we must get Persia definitely on our side by a formal treaty, so that if the Germans attacked, our position would be that of going to the assistance of "our brave allies." We ought to tell Marling that we attach real importance to getting the Persian Government on our side, and that, to achieve this, he should use the South Persia Rifles for purposes of bargaining.

The Chairman said that there were several questions arising out of Mr. Montagu's proposal. The South Persia Rifles were nominally a Persian force, but they were not recognised by the Persian Government, who were always contending for two things, that the South Persia Rifles should be under the Persian Government, and that they should be officered by neutrals after the war. He pointed out the danger of handing over as many as 6,000 armed men, who might even join hands with Wassmuss, and who would almost certainly roam about Southern Persia, looting. We must have a guarantee as to their behaviour during the war, and it was desirable, therefore, that they should be kept in existence, at any rate on the side of Kerman. Again, if they were to continue to exist, they must have a commander, and who should this commander be? He himself had sometimes regretted that Colonel Stokes, rather than Sir P. Sykes, had not been given the appointment. Incidentally he thought that if we made any proposals to the Persian Government, we might employ Stokes, who was a *persona grata* with the Persians. Again, if we handed over the South Persia Rifles to the Persian Government, who would pay them? It was not to be expected that we should go on paying them, and yet relinquish our control. Further, as to the terms to be made, what was it proposed to do with Sir P. Sykes? He had been 20-30 years in Persia, where he was liked, though the Chairman believed that he was regarded by the democratic party in Persia as unfavourable to Persian nationalism. Also, what was to happen at Teheran? A complete change of policy had been suggested: was Sir C. Marling the right man to carry it out, since he was regarded by the Persians as the leading exponent of the Anglo-Russian Convention School? We had also to consider the attitude of the Persian Government towards the Anglo-Russian Convention. We had announced that we regarded the treaty as in suspense, but in the absence of a stable Russian Government had refrained from abrogating it at once. Was there any good reason why it should not be frankly denounced, as it was already quite dead? We had then to consider what would become of our regulars in South Persia, where much disorder would ensue if we created, and left, a vacuum. The Persian Minister, in his interview with

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Mr. Oliphant, had more than once repeated that it was essential that our troops should remain *in terrorem*, in view of possible eventualities at Shiraz. If we decided to seek an alliance with Persia, one of our conditions must certainly be that Wassmuss must be got rid of. Another condition would be the withdrawal of Soulet. The Chairman suggested, therefore, that Marling should be acquainted with the views of the Eastern Committee, and that all these aspects of the case should be put before him, and his comments invited. As regards the political situation in Teheran, Marling in his telegrams had apparently acted on the hypothesis (*a*) that the new Prime Minister would be Vossugh, (*b*) that Vossugh could easily be placed in office, and (*c*) that Marling would bring pressure to bear on the Shah to have Vossugh invited to form a Cabinet. The facts to-day were, that a Bakhtiari Cabinet was in power.

Mr. Balfour said that he agreed with the Chairman's views of the case if the Committee were agreed that they should adopt the policy suggested by Mr. Montagu. To adopt it was tempting, but he was not certain that he understood it aright. Persia was to be asked to become our ally, but it was absurd to think that Persia could keep out the Turks or the Germans. The alliance, therefore was already based upon British bayonets, as Persia could give us no real military assistance. The policy would commit us to the recovery of Azerbaijan, and Mr. Balfour doubted whether, in this respect, we could carry out our part of the bargain. We would be asking a practically helpless country to come in on our side. He would like, before dealing with the Chairman's subsidiary points, to be quite clear as to the views of the Committee on fundamental questions.

The Chairman said that he himself only contemplated a friendly Persian Government, and a possible new way of making that Government friendly.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that if Persia engaged to turn out German agents, she would thereby adopt an unneutral attitude towards Germany, with whom she might find herself, in consequence, at war.

The Chairman said he agreed with Mr. Balfour, that one of Persia's conditions for a positive alliance would probably be that we should assist her to recover her fairest province, Azerbaijan; were we in a position to carry out an engagement of this kind?

General Macdonogh said that although a state of war between Germany and Persia did not exist, we were raising Persian levies and irregulars to stem the German advance, and Tabriz was already in the hands of the Turks.

General Smuts thought it might be dangerous if we saddled ourselves with an alliance with Persia. Mr. Montagu's policy was to clear out of South Persia. This policy might be successful, but to contract an alliance on that basis was a serious consideration.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that the Committee had already expressed itself as not unfavourable to an alliance, and that in any case, whether an alliance was concluded or not, we should be compelled to defend Persia. Besides, if no alliance were formed, we should be getting a wholly inadequate return for the surrender of the South Persia Rifles—merely a vague friendship, with disbanded troops, and Wassmuss creating trouble in the south.

The Chairman said that the Committee wished to get Persia on to our side. To secure this object, a score of different ways had already been tried. They were now considering whether we might not go further than before, *e.g.*, hand over the South Persia Rifles, abrogate the Anglo-Russian Convention, and so on.

Mr. Montagu asked whether we were aiming at the benevolent neutrality of Persia, or her active assistance—if the latter, it must mean an alliance. He himself could not see the difference

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between having Persia on our side and having her as an ally. He might be using inaccurate terms, but that was what he meant by an alliance.

General Macdonogh thought there was a considerable difference, and stated that we kept troops in North Persia in order to keep out the Germans and the Turks, and in South Persia, in order to control local disturbances.

Mr. Balfour thought that the object of the South Persia Rifles was to suppress the activities of Wassmuss.

The Chairman said that, broadly speaking, the intention of the South Persia Rifles was not so much to frustrate Wassmuss, as to keep the roads open, and the country quiet.

General Macdonogh said that he had circulated to the Committee, a note by the C.I.G.S. (E.C.-616) on the proposed change in the constitution of the South Persia Rifles. The note had advocated that the Shah and Vossugh should at once be informed that, in the event of the latter's appointment as Premier, His Majesty's Government would give assurances on the following lines:—

(1.) His Majesty's Government regard with sympathy the desire of the Persian Government to raise a uniform army for the whole of Persia, and will forthwith co-operate with a friendly Persian Government to this end.

(2.) In order to give effect to the above, His Majesty's Government are separating the control of such British and Indian troops as must temporarily be retained in South Persia from that of the South Persia Rifles, which is regarded as a purely Persian force.

(3.) His Majesty's Government recommend the abolition of the title "South Persia Rifles," and suggest that this force should be known as the first division of the Persian army, or by any other title which the Persian Government may prefer.

(4.) His Majesty's Government would welcome the appointment of a Persian officer, mutually agreed upon, to command the force.

(5.) His Majesty's Government will continue to pay for the maintenance of the force so long as British officers and instructors are retained.

In return for the above, the Persian Government should be required to agree—

(*a.*) To co-operate loyally with the British Government in the maintenance of order in South Persia; and

(*b.*) To retain the services of British officers and instructors until such time as they may be withdrawn by mutual agreement between the British and Persian Governments.

The note concluded by saying it was submitted that, by action on the above lines, the goodwill of the Shah might be obtained, Vossugh's appointment secured, his hands greatly strengthened on his accession to the Premiership, democratic and national opinion in Persia largely conciliated, and the ground, to a great extent, cut from under the feet of enemy propagandists.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, Mr. Balfour said that he believed that Marling was a man of courage and decision, and he would not like to remove him from his present post until he was satisfied that we could find an abler man to succeed him.

The Chairman said that at an earlier stage, he had formed a very high opinion of Marling, but that, latterly, he had not been so favourably impressed with his advice. Moreover, Marling was regarded by the Persians as out of sympathy with the policy which we were now considering. He quoted from a letter from Mr.

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Dobbs, an Indian civilian of much experience and knowledge of Persia, who thought that Marling's influence in Persia was impaired by his supposed anti-democratic prejudices.

Mr. Montagu said he had met and talked with Mr. Dobbs in India since the letter quoted by the Chairman had been written. Mr. Dobbs had then told him that if we were to try a new policy in Persia, we must have a new man at Teheran to carry it through, as Marling was regarded by the Persians as associated with the old and hated policy which found expression in the Anglo-Russian Convention. But had we a new policy? We were now talking of paying a very big price, *i.e.*, handing over the South Persia Rifles, of denouncing the Anglo-Russian Convention, and of agreeing to the formation of a national Persian army. But what was to be our return? He did not think it would be an adequate one unless Persia committed herself to a definite alliance with us. He himself advocated telling Persia that we were willing to give her our active co-operation in fighting our common enemies, and that she, in her turn, must get rid of enemy agents, and refrain from unfriendly action of every kind.

The Chairman said he was not quite clear that the dangers of an alliance might not outweigh the advantages, *e.g.*, the former might possibly include a demand that we should guarantee the integrity of the borders of Persia.

Lord Hardinge pointed out that we were already pledged to this by a treaty, which committed us to it, although by that treaty we guaranteed the integrity of her territories against Russia, and not Turkey or Germany.

The Chairman enquired whether we were committed by an actual treaty or had merely given assurances.

Mr. Oliphant said that, so far as his memory went, there was no signed agreement on our part actively to defend Persian territory.

The Chairman thought that, in any case, Marling must be consulted before the policy was decided upon. He suggested that the case as discussed to-day, should be put before Marling, who should be informed as to the price we were disposed to pay. The case could be based upon the views expressed at that meeting, and upon the note by the C.I.G.S. We should further ask Marling if, and how, we could get rid of Samsam-Es-Sultaneh, and get in Vossugh. Would it be sufficient to secure a friendly Persian Government without an alliance, and would an alliance, in Marling's opinion, be too big a price to pay?

Mr. Montagu suggested that the word "alliance" need not be used in the message, if it was quite clear that Persia would take action against and permit us to take action against the enemy.

General Smuts thought that all Mr. Montagu wished was that Persia should come in definitely on our side.

Mr. Balfour said that we were prepared now to offer a higher price, but it was in order to secure more thereby, viz., a definite pronouncement on the part of Persia that she was on our side. In his view, we were not offering Persia enough to induce her to fight, and so he did not think we should get what we wanted. In return for the South Persia Rifles, we were asking for Persia's active participation in the war. He did not think it right to denounce a treaty we had made with Russia so long as there was no Russian Government with whom we could negotiate. He would prefer to tell Persia that we regarded the Anglo-Russian Convention as in abeyance.

The Chairman remarked that the Anglo-Russian Convention was really an obsession with the Persian Government, and that the Convention was already dead. He thought it inconceivable that the conditions which obtained at the time that the Convention was signed would ever be reproduced in the future.

Mr. Balfour was inclined to think that the existence of the Convention was, on the whole, rather advantageous to us.

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General Smuts remarked that our very presence at Hamadan was a violation of the Convention.

Mr. Montagu thought that the terms we offered should include the abrogation of the Convention which had been denounced by the only Russian Government in existence, and, moreover, was inconvenient to us.

The Chairman said it was a question whether they should say that the Convention was in suspense or cancelled, and the arguments on both sides appeared to be about equal.

Mr. Montagu doubted whether advantage was to be derived from consulting Marling, who had been identified with a quite different policy. Would he enter enthusiastically into a new policy? Time was pressing, and it was important that whatever decision was arrived at, we should get to work without delay. He suggested that, as we got our information from many different people in Persia, we might consult some of our other officers, *e.g.*, Colonel Stokes and Colonel Gough.

Mr. Oliphant pointed out that Colonel Gough knew nothing about the situation at Teheran, and that it would be difficult to get into touch with Stokes, who had not been heard of since he went off on the 3rd June to meet Kuchik Khan, the chief of the Jangalis. He reminded the Committee that Marling had now advocated the policy of an alliance with Persia for over a year, although His Majesty's Government had not so far consented to its adoption.

Mr. Montagu suggested that it might be possible to send Stokes as our *pro tempore* agent to negotiate the new agreement.

General Macdonogh suggested, in regard to the suggested change in our representative at Teheran, that our policy in Persia might be handed over to the Indian Government, who should be invited to send an official to go to Teheran.

The Chairman pointed out that, as Lord Hardinge knew well, the Persian Government distrusted all Indian officials as being bureaucratic and unsympathetic.

Mr. Balfour said that he himself was all in favour of a policy of concilation, but he doubted whether we should obtain, by an alliance, anything beyond what we got at present.

Mr. Montagu thought that, in the present situation, there were grounds for a certain amount of optimism, and we ought to seize, and make the best of, our present opportunity. The Persian nation believed that, by our Convention with Russia, we had practically divided up the country between two foreign nations; they felt, moreover, strongly on the subject of a Persian national army; and they regarded us as steadfastly opposed to nationalism in Persia. Further, Mr. Dobbs, and those who agreed with him, thought that it would be easy to get in young Persia on our side, if we only went about it the right way.

Mr. Oliphant said that Marling had suggested that, if we handed over the South Persia Rifles to the Persian Government, this would be an earnest of our good faith.

Mr. Montagu hoped that any telegram that was sent to the Viceroy of India might include an intimation that His Majesty's Government were giving their sympathetic consideration to the policy advocated by the Government of India.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That the Foreign Office should be asked to draft a telegram to Sir Charles Marling based upon General Wilson's Memorandum, and embodying the views expressed at the meeting, and asking for his opinion, and that the draft should be submitted to the India Office, the War Office, and the Chairman for approval before despatch.*

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Our Policy in Persia: British Troops at Teheran.

3. General Macdonogh referred to a telegram from Sir C. Marling, dated the 19th June, 1918 (E.C.-598), in which Marling had urged the immediate despatch of a much stronger force to North-West Persia than appeared to be contemplated at present; the numbers need not be very great, but apart from keeping open the Enzeli Road, or meeting a Turkish advance from Azerbaijan, which seemed unlikely, they should be sent to garrison Kasvin and Hamadan, in such strength as to permit the despatch of, say, 1,000 men, in case of need, in the direction of Teheran, and a column towards Isfahan. General Macdonogh said that the Director of Military Operations wished to know if we should send a detachment of an armoured motor column to Teheran.

The Chairman said that Marling, who must know the difficulties of supplying troops in Northern Persia, kept on saying that there were not sufficient troops there, and appeared to think that we ought to have enough troops to put into Teheran.

General Macdonogh said that he had told our Military Attachè at Teheran that he must advise Marling of the military, and physical, difficulties in supplying any stronger force from Mesopotamia for Persia. General Marshall was already faced with great difficulties in supplying even the present force; the lines of communication extended for some hundreds of miles; our transport was entirely by motor lorries, and consumed a very large quantity of petrol. The War Office would certainly sooner have a division than a battalion in that area, but the difficulties were almost insurmountable, although we were endeavouring to send out more cars.

Lord Hardinge was of opinion that we had already quite enough men on the Hamadan-Kasvin Road.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office saw no necessity to send troops to Teheran. It was quite sufficient to have a column at Kasvin.

The Committee decided:—

That in the circumstances the despatch of the stronger force asked for by Sir Charles Marling to North-West Persia was not possible, and that the War Office, in consultation with the Foreign Office, should arrange that the position should be explained to Sir Charles Marling, and that the latter should be informed that it was impossible to meet his demand, and also that in present circumstances it was unnecessary to send troops to Teheran.

Baku and the Caucasus.

4. General Macdonogh referred to a telegram from the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, dated the 21st June, 1918 (E.C.-613), stating that on the previous day a detachment of 220 rifles and one gun of Dunsterforce, which left Menzil for Resht with four armoured cars, were with Bicharakoff; that a wire had been received from Dunsterville stating that Bicharakoff was complaining of our lack of support, that he had opened the road for us to Enzeli, and to suit our convenience he had delayed his departure to Baku, while we had done nothing but pay for the maintenance of his force. Bicharakoff had asked that the four armoured cars should accompany him to Baku, and our liasion officer strongly recommended this course. The telegram concluded by saying that, as Bicharakoff was to go to Baku on the following day, and an immediate decision was necessary, General Marshall had authorised Dunsterville to include four armoured cars, now at Enzeli, as part of the personnel escort of the officers accompanying Bicharakoff.

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The Committee decided:

To approve the action taken by the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia.

Secretarial Procedure.

5. Mr. Montagu said that he had a small point of procedure he wished to raise in regard to the method of recording the Proceedings of the Committee. He thought that long-hand notes were open to the objection that they could not record the whole of the discussion; that certain important points, and occasionally the sequence of an argument, must almost inevitably be missed under such conditions, and that valuable time of members was taken up in scrutinising and correcting draft Minutes. He thought, therefore, that it might be preferable either to have the Minutes recorded in shorthand, or that the decisions only, and not the discussions, should be recorded. He had raised the same point at a recent Meeting of the Economic Defence and Development Committee, who had decided in favour of recording decisions only. He understood that this procedure was now adopted in the case of the Proceedings of the War Cabinet.

The Chairman explained that:

(a.) The procedure followed by the Eastern Committee was identical with that obtaining in the case of the War Cabinet, with this exception, that opinions expressed by members of the War Cabinet were not, in the ordinary course, attributed to those members by name, as the Cabinet was a corporate body, with, presumably, one opinion only, but that statements made by ministers and others attending the War Cabinet meetings, and even sometimes by War Cabinet Ministers themselves, were recorded against their own names.

(b.) The Minutes constituted a running record of events in the Middle East, and this record was found useful by many who were not members of the Committee, *e.g.*, Mr. Chamberlain had asked to be supplied with draft Minutes, in addition to the printed copies he received as a member of the Cabinet, as he found them valuable in assisting him to follow the trend of events, which it was difficult to pursue if he had only the very varied, daily telegrams to turn to. Further, the Secretary of State for War had asked Colonel Amery to obtain special copies of the Minutes, in order to keep Lord Milner *au courant* with what was happening in the Middle East. Moreover, he (the Chairman) was informed that the British Section of the Supreme War Council had recently asked for copies of the Minutes, in order that they might thereby follow the current of events and our policy and activities in the areas which came within the Committee's scope.

(c.) He had had an opportunity of discussing that morning with Mr. Chamberlain, the procedure of the two Committees of which they were the respective Chairmen, and Mr. Chamberlain had agreed that the conditions were such as to render a different procedure desirable in each case.

(d.) The alternative that shorthand notes should be taken was open to the following objections:

(1.) Shorthand notes, he was informed, taken of the Proceedings of the Imperial War Cabinet, had resulted in very extensive corrections being made.

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In some cases the statements of Dominion Ministers had been almost entirely rewritten. Consequently, this alternative would probably not appreciably relieve members of the Committee of the burden of scrutiny.

(2.) It would involve a departure from the practice followed in the case of War Cabinet Meetings.

The Committee, after a brief discussion, decided:

That the present procedure should continue to be followed.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*,
25*th June*, 1918.

APPENDIX.

British Policy in Afghanistan and Turkestan.

Note by C.I.G.S.

THE policy adopted by the Government of India with regard to Afghanistan since the early days of the war has been to place the Amir within a ring fence designed to prevent the penetration into Afghanistan of the disturbing influences of the war or the actual entry of enemy agents. Having completed this fence by linking up the Sistan Field Force with a Russian cordon in North-East Persia, the Government of India has consistently adhered to the policy of avoiding any action such as might stir up the hornets' nest in which the Amir's subjects live but do not rest.

This policy has been fully justified by the success with which it has been rewarded, but that part of the fence which lay along the Northern frontier of Afghanistan has been torn down by the Russian Revolution, and the conversion of the Sistan Field Force into the East Persia cordon, extending from Khwash to Meshed, still leaves the Russo-Afghan frontier open not only to the physical approach of enemy agents, but to all the exciting influences which spring from the present chaos in Russia and the German advance towards the Caspian.

The situation of Afghanistan has thus undergone a very material change, and it is urgently necessary that His Majesty's Government should frame a policy to meet the changed situation.

The ring fence round Afghanistan is now only two-thirds of a circumference, and it is no longer safe to pursue the policy of "let well alone." If we attempt to do so, we shall soon find that under the influence of enemy agents "well" has become "ill," and that the Amir has joined the ranks of our enemies.

This is no pessimistic prophecy, but is a plain statement of an eventuality which is inevitable unless counter-measures are taken immediately. The German wave, having rolled over the Ukraine with almost incredible rapidity, is sweeping over the Don basin towards the Volga. In the Trans-Caucasus German troops are in occupation of Tiflis, and are only waiting for promised reinforcements to continue their advance on Baku. In Turkestan there are 40,000 German and Austrian prisoners of war. We are told, it is true, that they are practically starving with no prestige in German eyes, but Sir George Macartney adds the rider that "they will remain passive in default of a leader with funds and arms." How long will the Germans allow us before supplying those wants? The answer may be taken from the mouths of the German agents who are reported as being particularly active in Tashkend, where they are visiting the leading Moslems regularly, and telling them that in two or three months Germany will be in occupation of Turkestan. How then is this great and imminent menace to the security of India to be averted? (It must be remembered that if this menace is allowed to develop into a reality, it means the locking up for the internal and external defence of India of troops and other military resources which are vital to the prosecution of the war in other theatres.)

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The key to the solution of this problem lies undoubtedly in Afghanistan. The Germans knew it when they sent Captain Niedermeyer and his Mission to the Amir's capital in 1915, to negotiate an alliance which was to come into active operation on the appearance of a German army on the Afghan frontier. How are we to turn that key so as to lock the gates of India against the advancing enemy? There is only one way—Afghanistan must be induced to commit herself against our enemies while their strength is still small in the distance, and while the British Star is still shining in the East. The following extract from a report from Meshed, dated the 15th June, is quoted in order to show that the moment, though rapidly passing, is not yet past:—

> "From end to end of Turkestan he (a refugee Russian officer whose report in other respects is fully confirmed) heard the English continually mentioned. Their advent is expected and ardently desired particularly by the Turkomans and Sarts in whom they place their sole hope of restoring orderly conditions. Failing the English, a German occupation is regarded as probable."

On the 3rd January, 1918, the India Office suggested the despatch of a British Mission to Turkestan. The idea was encouraged by the War Office and the Foreign Office, and it was warmly taken up by the Military Department of the Government of India. The Foreign Department of the Government of India threw a wet blanket over the proposal, but under pressure from the Home Government steps were slowly taken towards the despatch of Missions to two selected bases at Meshed and Kashgar. The present position is that the personnel of these Missions is at these bases, with the exception of the Chief of the Meshed Mission. No British officer has, however, as yet been allowed to enter Turkestan, although both the Consul-General at Kashgar and the Military Attaché at Meshed have advised in favour of this being done.

The Government of India are "diffident about formulating any definite course of action." Let the War Cabinet decide, for such diffidence is the highway to inaction and defeat.

The Government of India, while fearing that an inopportune endeavour to negotiate with the Bolsheviks might harden their hearts against us *(sic)*, yet recognise the importance of lifting the veil of political and military darkness which now prevails over Central Asia. The latter argument is sound, but why consider the Bolsheviks in this region where they cannot even claim a shadowy right to be regarded as the *de facto* government of the country? Tenderness towards the Bolsheviks on the part of the Allies has already placed European Russia in the hands of the Germans and Siberia within their reach. If a similar policy is adopted in Turkestan, Afghanistan will shortly be within the grasp of the Central Powers. We should send our agents into Turkestan in order to obtain for us military and political intelligence, so as to ensure that our policy (both military and political) moves on sound lines. Meanwhile, with what are we to oppose the coming German advance towards Afghanistan? There is only one possible instrument—the Afghan Army. The Amir has himself given us a pretext for approaching him, by putting forward a demand (a ridiculously extravagant demand) for arms and ammunition. Certainly no British or Indian Government could contemplate the despatch of munitions of war up the Khyber on a large scale at such a time as the present. If, however, the Amir is sincere, and it is believed that he sincerely desires at any rate, to avert the pressure which would be brought on him by the extension of German power on his Northern frontier, let us invite his co-operation in resisting that menace which is as much opposed to his interests as to those of the British Empire. It is submitted that the Amir should be encouraged to occupy the Murghab Valley from Merv to Kushk, and to assist the Emir of Bokhara in holding and controlling the Bokharan Railway. The occupation of the Murghab Valley, including the lost Afghan territory of Pendjeh would prove an attractive bait to the Amir. No false sentiments towards Russia should deter us from offering the Amir this bribe. All loyal and educated Russians recognise that Russia must pay a price to be saved from further destruction by Germany, and no such Russian would grudge the Amir this small patch of territory as a reward for his assistance.

Regarding the matter from another point of view, it is certain that if the Germans once effectively occupy Turkestan, they will be ready to give the Amir a far larger slice of Russian territory as a reward for his co-operation. It is suggested that the Amir should be invited to act at once, and to despatch a Mission to Meshed to consult with the British Mission at that place with regard to British co-operation.

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Te revert to the Amir's demand for arms, he should be informed that if he takes action on the lines suggested, the maximum possible consignment will be despatched forthwith via the Sistan Railway and the line of the Meshed cordon, where there is a fair road, for delivery to him at Sarakha or some such convenient point on the North-East frontier of Persia. As soon as the Amir has committed himself to action on the lines suggested, a gift of treasure and a small consignment of arms might be sent direct to Kabul. Once the Afghan Army is committed to a campaign in Turkestan, of which the opening stages at least will meet with relatively little opposition, the danger of an Afghan attack on India will disappear. The highly successful blockade of the Mohmands, and the severe punishment administered to the Mahsuds and the Marris within the past twelve months are not forgotten in Kabul and Kandahar.

A note on the Afghan Army and a skeleton* map to illustrate this paper are attached.

HENRY WILSON, C.I.G.S.

General Staff,
War Office, June 21, 1918.

APPENDIX TO THE ABOVE NOTE.

Note on the Afghan Army.

Strength.—The number of men available for active service is as follows:—

With units of the regular army	80,000
Khasadars (Militia)	30,000
Khawanin Sowars (Feudal Yeomanry)	9,000
Tribesmen (fighting men) 1,000,000; of whom the maximum number likely to concentrate in a single army is estimated at	100,000

Small Arms.—The number of rifles available is approximately as follows:—

.303-in.	50,000
Martini-Henry	500,000
Snider	50,000

The Arsenal at Kabul turns out 200-300 rifles per month.

Guns.—There are about 500-600 guns of modern type, mostly mountain guns.

Organisation.—It seems probable that the "Kandak" organisation is in the process of being introduced throughout Afghanistan.

I "Kandak" = 1/3rd Brigade =
- 600 infantry.
- 200 cavalry.
- 200 artillery.
- 6 machine guns.
- 6 mountain guns.

Equipment.—During the past three years great progress has been made in the clothing and equipment of the army, special factories having been set up for the manufacture of soap, boots, uniforms, &c.

Training and Efficiency.—A training school, said to be "on the German system," has been established at Kabul. It is also known that a large number of escaped Austrian officer prisoners of war from Turkestan have been employed as instructors for the army. Neidermeyer, on his return to Germany from Afghanistan in April 1917, stated that the Amir kept 150,000 men under arms, and that they had reached a fair state of discipline and efficiency.

General Staff, War Office,
June 21, 1918.

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* Sufficient copies of the map were not received to circulate one to each member of the Committee.

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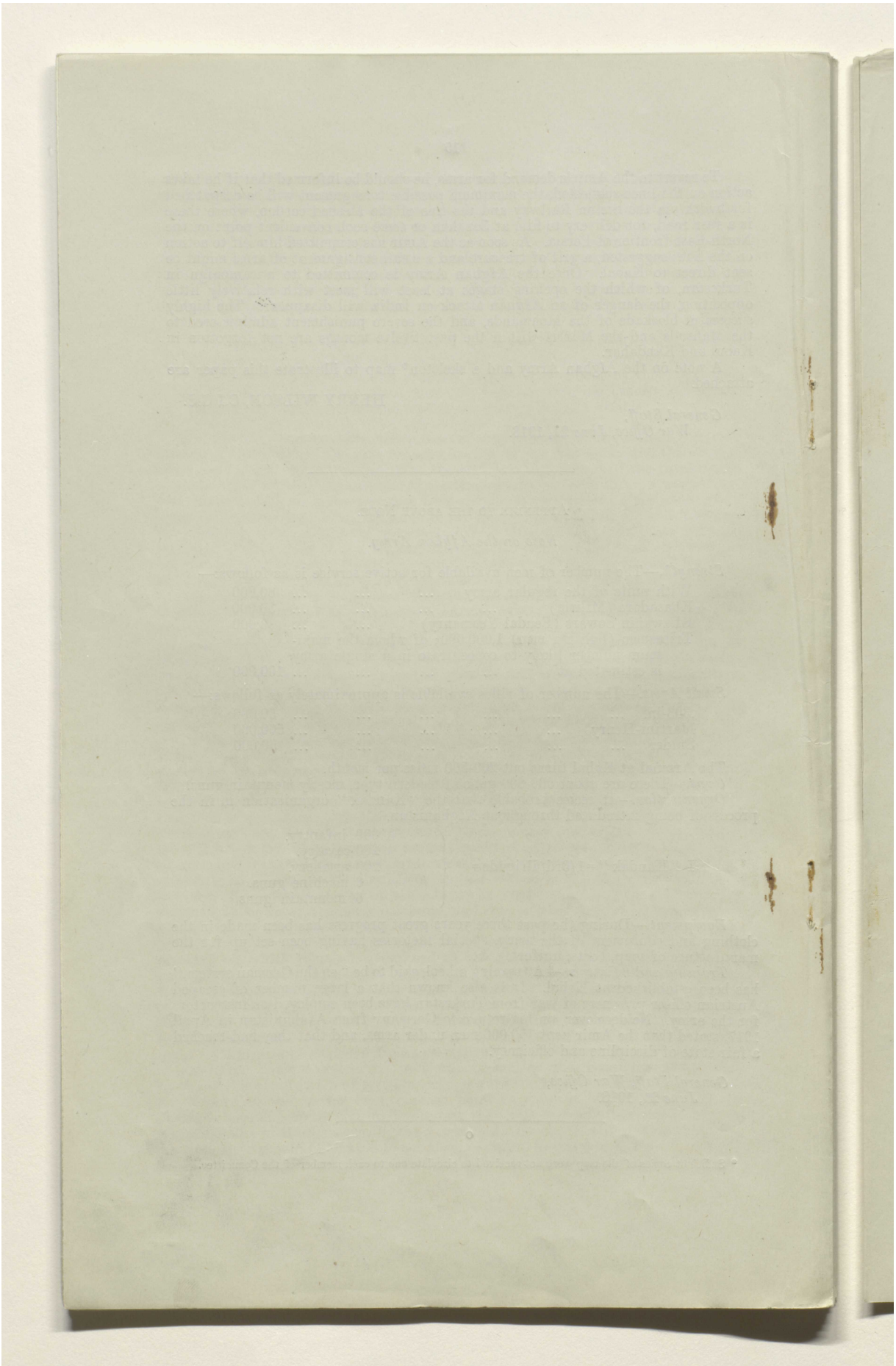

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Lord Curzon.

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Printed for the War Cabinet. July 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 17th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, July 1, 1918, at 5 P.M

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (representing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General P. P. DE B. RADCLIFFE, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON (representing the Director of Military Intelligence).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

The Koweit Blockade.

1. The Chairman said that the situation as regards the Koweit blockade had been summarised in a Paper (E.C.–512) by the War Office, which indicated the position as it stood on the 19th ultimo. On the 25th June, our Political Agent at Bagdad (E.C.–638) had suggested that unless the offer of the Sheikh was to be accepted, the only alternative, as a real solution of the Koweit question, was an armed occupation. He understood that on the 28th ultimo a telegram, which had not yet been circulated to the Committee, had been sent to the Viceroy from the India Office, to the effect that it was understood that the alternatives propounded by the Political Agent at Koweit were (1) the despatch of troops to form an effective land cordon round Koweit, (2) the acceptance of the Sheikh's overtures, as reported in Bagdad telegram No. 4742 of the 4th June. This telegram further stated that His Majesty's Government were prepared to authorise (1) and the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, was willing to spare the necessary troops, but the military advisers of the Viceroy desired to postpone action pending consultation with Sir P. Cox. The telegram enquired whether there was any objection to immediate action on the lines of (2), which need not, apparently, prejudice the subsequent despatch of troops if the leakage of supplies continued despite the Sheikh's undertakings. The Chairman thought that this telegram succinctly

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summarised the situation and would commend itself to the Committee. It had, however, been crossed by a despatch from the Viceroy (E.C.-652), which recommended that any message sent to the Sheikh should be expressed in terms as conciliatory as possible without loss of firmness; and further stated that, while the Government of India appreciated the desirability of checking trade with Koweit, they did not consider this of sufficient importance to justify the risk of an open breach with the Sheikh, and, consequently, the necessity of military occupation with its far-reaching effect on other ports of Arabia. The note issued by the War Office (E.C.-670) indicated that the latest information received by that Department went to show that the blockade was successful.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that the India Office was prepared to accept the proposals of the Indian Government, subject to the concurrence of the War Office. The point was whether supplies were getting to Medina, Damascus, and Egypt. It was evident that the Sheikh wished to be given the opportunity of proving his loyalty, and he thought that the Indian Government were apprehensive of anything in the nature of a threat being used when the Sheikh was approached. The political agent at Bagdad had been instructed to tell our agent at Koweit to use his discretion as to the form of words that should be employed when approaching the Sheikh.

Colonel Gribbon said that the War Office were quite prepared to endorse the procedure suggested by the Indian Government.

After a brief discussion, the Committee decided—

To endorse the policy suggested by the Government of India, and instructed the Secretary of State for India to give effect to this decision.

Position of Sir P. Sykes and the control of the Military Operations.

2. The Chairman said that the decision of the Committee on the 21st ultimo (E.C. 15th Minutes (2)), had been communicated to the Indian Government in the Secretary of State for India's telegram of the 22nd June, 1918 (E.C. 619), which stated that His Majesty's Government had decided to place all British troops in South Persia under the command of a single officer, with the rank of Brigadier-General, to be sent from India and to act under the instructions of the Indian Government; that if that Government saw no objection they should take immediate steps to select and despatch an officer accordingly; the officer's command would not include the South Persia Rifles, which would remain, as at present, a Persian force under Sykes as Inspector-General, but it would be open to the officer selected to apply to Sykes for co-operation of the South Persia Rifles whenever the latter thought necessary; and that the above arrangement should be regarded as provisional only, pending the consideration of the whole question of policy in Persia about to be undertaken by His Majesty's Government in the immediate futur when full weight would be given to the views which the Governor-General had so often urged. A reply to this telegram had since been received from the Viceroy, dated the 27th June, 1918 (E.C. 649), stating that the following considerations presented themselves to the Indian Government regarding the proposed appointment of a Brigadier-General to command Indian troops in South Persia:—

(*a.*) Shiraz was now isolated and no Brigadier-General could get there, while, in any case, united command of this force was necessary during present military operations. The only officer in Shiraz whom the Commander-in-chief would recommend for the appointment was Colonel Orton, at present Sykes' deputy in the South Persia Rifles.

(*b.*) Elsewhere in South Persia, except in Bushire, Indian troops,

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including reinforcements, number only 1,700, which was not a Brigadier-General's command.

(*c.*) At Bushire, a Brigadier-General now commanded, and was fully occupied with preparations for a possible advance in the autumn.

(*d.*) Divorce of Indian troops from the South Persia Rifles would duplicate administration with resultant complications of any questions of supplies, ammunition, and personnel.

The telegram also stated that the consideration of these factors led the Indian Government to the conclusion that the proposed appointment would be better deferred until the Shiraz situation had been cleared; and, further, that as one authority should exercise military and political control, it seemed to the Indian Government that the command of Indian troops under that Government's political control, and the command of the South Persia Rifles, politically directed from Teheran, would hardly work with harmony and good results. The telegram concluded with the statement that no movement inland was contemplated at present from Bushire. As regards Bundar Abbas, it did not seem to the Government of India to be wise at the present juncture, on both military and political grounds, to suspend a movement which was primarily intended to reinforce and supply Shiraz, to steady the Kawam and his tribe, and to support the Kerman Brigade of the South Persia Rifles.

It was generally agreed by the Committee that the Government of India had made out a good case, and that action on the Committee's decision of the 21st June should be regarded as suspended for the time being.

Russian Turkestan.

3. The Chairman said that the question of the present situation in Russian Turkestan was raised in respect of two telegrams. The first (E.C. 656) was a despatch from the Caucasus military agent, Colonel Pike, stating that a representative from Turkestan had been interviewing him, outlining the general situation as it appeared to him from the information received, and indicating the line of action he recommended should be pursued. The Chairman pointed out that Colonel Pike's telegram was dated the 20th May, that it had been despatched on the 20th June, and had only been received in England nine days later. It was, therefore, six weeks old. The second (E.C. 651) was a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India, dated the 26th June, forwarding a message from Major Redl, stating that in Redl's opinion no time should be lost in getting into touch with the new situation, and requesting permission to send Captain Teague Jones to Trans-Caspia with the primary object of interrupting the railway. The Chairman said that it appeared that Captain Teague Jones and Captain Jarvis had apparently already been despatched on their mission.

General Radcliffe said that the view of the War Office was that it was well worth while to send officers to Krasnovodsk in order to attempt to get into touch with the friendly elements of the population, and to prevent the export of cotton from Turkestan by German agents. He suggested that certain selected officers from Dunsterville's force should be sent from Enzeli to Krasnovodsk, and possibly a small detachment of troops if the situation was found to be promising. His department had been informed that we had secured six ships on the Caspian Sea which we could utilise for our purposes. He understood that Bicharakof was already embarking his force, which consisted of 1,500 men and four armoured cars, at Enzeli, *en route* to Baku. General Radcliffe said that his department was not quite satisfied that General Marshall fully appreciated the situation, and the necessity of immediate steps being taken to interrupt the Trans-Caspian railway. This inter-

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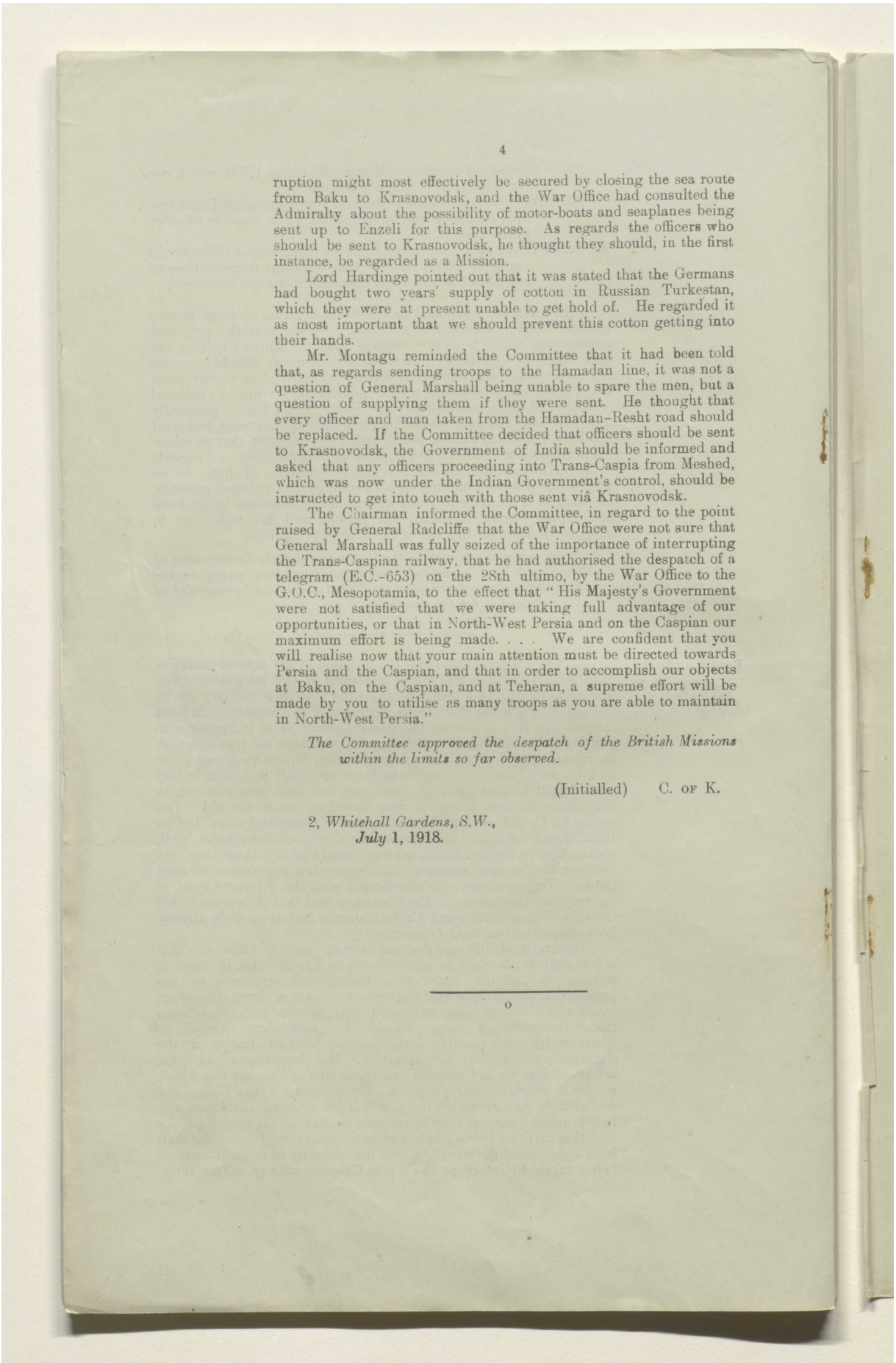

ruption might most effectively be secured by closing the sea route from Baku to Krasnovodsk, and the War Office had consulted the Admiralty about the possibility of motor-boats and seaplanes being sent up to Enzeli for this purpose. As regards the officers who should be sent to Krasnovodsk, he thought they should, in the first instance, be regarded as a Mission.

Lord Hardinge pointed out that it was stated that the Germans had bought two years' supply of cotton in Russian Turkestan, which they were at present unable to get hold of. He regarded it as most important that we should prevent this cotton getting into their hands.

Mr. Montagu reminded the Committee that it had been told that, as regards sending troops to the Hamadan line, it was not a question of General Marshall being unable to spare the men, but a question of supplying them if they were sent. He thought that every officer and man taken from the Hamadan–Resht road should be replaced. If the Committee decided that officers should be sent to Krasnovodsk, the Government of India should be informed and asked that any officers proceeding into Trans-Caspia from Meshed, which was now under the Indian Government's control, should be instructed to get into touch with those sent viâ Krasnovodsk.

The Chairman informed the Committee, in regard to the point raised by General Radcliffe that the War Office were not sure that General Marshall was fully seized of the importance of interrupting the Trans-Caspian railway, that he had authorised the despatch of a telegram (E.C.-653) on the 28th ultimo, by the War Office to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, to the effect that "His Majesty's Government were not satisfied that we were taking full advantage of our opportunities, or that in North-West Persia and on the Caspian our maximum effort is being made. . . . We are confident that you will realise now that your main attention must be directed towards Persia and the Caspian, and that in order to accomplish our objects at Baku, on the Caspian, and at Teheran, a supreme effort will be made by you to utilise as many troops as you are able to maintain in North-West Persia."

The Committee approved the despatch of the British Missions within the limits so far observed.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
July 1, 1918.

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Lord Curzon.

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E.C. 18th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, July 4, 1918, *at* 5.30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade (representing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Also attended:

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., India Office.

Mr. H. W. KENNARD, Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

British Policy in Afghanistan.

1. WITH reference to E.C., 16th Meeting, Minute 2, the Committee had before them two telegrams, dated the 1st July, from the Viceroy (E.C.–689, and E.C.–692).

The Chairman said the first of these telegrams was the reply which the Indian Government proposed to send to the rather troublesome letter which had been received from the Amir, and the second was their reply to the Committee's telegram about policy. He thought that the Indian Government had not quite apprehended what the Committee had in view. The Committee had not contemplated a new instrument, or treaty of alliance, but the active military co-operation of the Amir. They had further thought that if the Amir expressed any desire to recover Penjdeh, the Indian Government might give him to understand that they would lend him money and men to assist him to achieve his object. Lord Curzon thought that the Government of India had given rather a wider ambit to the Committee's proposals than the Committee had intended.

Mr. Montagu said that he agreed that there had been apparently some confusion of thought on the part of the Government of India;

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possibly, like himself as regards Persia, they saw no difference between an alliance and co-operation. This point, however, did not really affect their argument. The view of his department was that it would be very difficult to press India any further in the matter. Their argument was a powerful one, and as the Indian Government had hitherto been successful throughout the war in their dealings with the Amir, he thought that the Committee should trust their judgment in the present case. He suggested the following draft reply being sent to India :—

"(Foreign Secret.)

"Your telegrams of 1st July: Afghanistan.

"His Majesty's Government fully appreciate force of your arguments against approaching Amir on lines suggested in my telegram of the 25th June. Point is one on which they feel bound to defer to views of your Excellency's Government, particularly in view of conspicuous success with which you have handled Afghan affairs throughout war. But leaving aside question of alliance, might not opportunity at least be taken to advise Amir to be strong and prepared for all emergencies on his northern frontier? Subject to this suggestion, policy recommended in your later telegram of the 1st July is approved. With regard to your earlier telegram draft reply to Amir seems to us open to criticism in certain particulars, *e.g.*, passage relating to alleged letter to German Emperor where action imputed to Amir is first treated as enemy invention and subsequently condoned and almost approved. But we recognise that your Excellency must be best judge of line of argument likely to affect Amir favourably, and on understanding that you are satisfied that language of draft is best calculated to achieve object desired, you are authorised to address Amir accordingly with or without modification to give effect to our suggestion regarding northern frontier. Your Excellency's Government no doubt appreciate fact that whatever it may be desirable to say to Amir, there is real danger of enemy ultimately developing considerable strength on Afghan frontier."

General Macdonogh said that he doubted if India really appreciated the world-wide bearing of the present situation in the Middle East. He thought they would gain valuable enlightenment from a review of the Middle Eastern position made by the Chairman at a recent meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet. He suggested that a summary of the statement might be telegraphed to the Viceroy.

The Chairman said that it would be impossible satisfactorily to condense the argument he had elaborated at considerable length in the statement referred to; he had, however, no objection to a copy of the statement in full being sent by mail to India.

Mr. Montagu said that the view of the Indian Government was that if the policy suggested by the Committee were followed, it would be construed as a sign of great weakness on our part, while any overt action on the Amir's part towards departing from his neutrality and coming on to our side, might raise great popular indignation and result in his being murdered or deposed. No argument that we could use would dissuade him that it was not our weakness which induced us to approach him with a view to an alliance. Mr. Montagu thought, therefore, that the Committee should accept the advice of the Indian Government who, in their reply, should be asked to lay special stress on the difficulty of meeting his wishes in regard to arms, owing to our heavy military commitments in different parts of the world.

The Chairman said he entirely agreed with the Secretary of State for India. The question of the Amir, as he knew from his own experience, was the most difficult problem with which the Indian

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Government had to deal, and it was one on which the opinion of that Government should, as a rule, be decisive. He thought it would be a very grave step for the Committee to over-rule the Indian Government in the present instance.

General Smuts agreed that the Committee should trust the judgment of the Indian Government.

Lord Robert Cecil concurred, though he said he was not quite so sure about omitting all reference to Penjdeh, nor did he quite understand the phrase "assist in every reasonable way."

General Macdonogh pointed out that, since the telegram from India had been received, Mahendra Pratap, who had gone to Berlin on the 23rd March, had caused to be delivered to the Amir, a letter from Turkey.

The Chairman said that this only showed that communications were still passing between the Amir and the enemy. He was following his usual policy of flirting with both sides.

Mr. Shuckburg explained that Mahendra Pratap was a disloyal Indian of no particular family. As regards the Amir, the latter had always said to the Government of India, "I shall carry out my pledges to you, but you must trust me to do it my own way, even if my actions sometimes seem to you suspicious."

Mr. Montagu said that his draft also covered the second telegram from the Viceroy of the 1st July (E.C. 692) in which the gist of the proposed reply of the Government of India to the Amir was given.

The Chairman thought that the Committee might generally approve the proposed reply to the Amir, but he was doubtful about certain passages, for example—"Even if these allegations are true," "Indeed my appreciation of your difficulties is enhanced," and the coupling of "our resources were never so great" with the practical difficulties of supplying arms.

Lord Robert Cecil enquired whether it would be wise definitely and absolutely to turn down his request for munitions.

General Smuts pointed out that the door was left open by the phrase "Nevertheless we are ready to consider any further requests."

The Chairman said that the question of money and munitions for Afghanistan was an old story. The actual position was that we gave the Amir a handsome subsidy and the Amir made munitions in his own factories. He had been loyal so far, but he was an Oriental and could not be implicitly relied upon. On almost every occasion when India had presented guns to States on the Indian border, *e.g.*, Manipur, they had, sooner or later, been turned against us. We refused to supply guns of large calibre even to Nepal.

Mr. Montagu thought that there might be circumstances when we should have to depart from this practice if, for instance, the Amir were actually fighting a common enemy from the north. As regards the language employed in the proposed reply, he thought that it had probably been carefully considered and chosen, as the Viceroy was constantly exchanging letters with the Amir.

General Macdonogh referred to two messages which had been received, one from the C.G.S. India, dated the 27th June, and the other from Major Redl about skilled workmen going to Afghanistan. It was alleged that they would be employed on the extension of the railway from Kushk to Herat.

The Chairman thought it most unlikely that the Amir would permit the construction of any railway within his own territory; it was much more probable that these skilled men were wanted for the munition factories.

Mr. Montagu said that the Indian Government, in their proposed reply, suggested that their existing promise of 44 lakhs at the end of the war should be cancelled, and that, instead, they should promise to give the Amir 50 lakhs on the 15th July in gold bullion, and another 50 lakhs six months later. He thought that this proposal was sound as it was important not to deny the Amir

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money as well as arms of all kinds. Incidentally he stated that certain Englishmen who had recently returned from Afghanistan to India had said that, when they left, the situation was quite normal.

The Committee decided—

To ask Mr. Montagu to amend his draft in the sense of the above discussion, and submit it to the Chairman for his approval before despatch.

Our Policy in Persia.

2. The Chairman referred to Teheran telegram No. 593 of the 1st July (E.C.–691) (which he himself did not regard as a very helpful message), in which Sir C. Marling had said that the change of policy suggested by the Committee was not likely to be successful at present. Marling harped, as usual, on our announcement last March of the despatch of troops and the promise of more to North-West Persia, and the failure of that promise to materialise. This, however, was not the fault of the Committee; it was due to the fact that General Marshall had not fully realised the importance of pushing forward in strength from Baghdad towards the North-East. Marling seemed to think that we proposed to withdraw from Resht and Enzeli, for which there was no foundation, and he also had a tilt against the levies being raised by Dunsterville in Azerbaijan. When the enemy raised levies it was always cited as a proof of his influence with the native populations. If we raised them, it was denounced by our Minister as bad policy.

Mr. Montagu thought that what was in Marling's mind was "your original policy was to go to Kasvin so as to be within reach of Teheran; instead of staying at Kasvin you push on to Resht, and you leave nothing at Kasvin to support Vossugh in case he comes into power." We had no doubt changed our policy, and Marling, who constantly harped on the necessity of strengthening Kasvin, felt that at present we were much too weak there.

Lord Robert Cecil said that Marling wanted a force at Kasvin, not to go to Teheran, but in order to support Vossugh if necessary. Marling feared that we did not realise the importance, for this purpose, of using regular troops instead of levies.

General Macdonogh said that General Marshall had not yet replied to the strong telegram which the Committee had authorised the War Office to send him on the 28th June (E.C.–653) as regards strengthening the Hamadan cordon and getting more troops up the road. This all depended on the question of supply, which again was mainly a matter of petrol, which could not be obtained locally. The infantry brigade at Kasvin, asked for by Marling, would require a very considerable number of lorries. The Committee had agreed that a mobile motor-car column on the road would be of much greater value than a much larger force of infantry of low mobility. General Marshall had plenty of men whom he could easily send up, as the enemy's position in Mesopotamia was very weak, if only he could supply them. We had informed General Marshall that we were sending out more Ford vans, &c. In reply to a question from General Smuts, General Macdonogh explained that two Turkish divisions were moving from Batum to Julfa, probably with the intention of advancing along the River Araxes to Baku, concentrating at that place from Elizabetopol, Alexandropol, and Julfa. The Turks had also 2,000 men at Tabriz. It appeared that relations between the Turks and the Germans were becoming strained, as we had information that the former had destroyed two bridges north of Kara Kliss in order to break the connection between themselves and the Germans. In reply to a further question about disquieting news that had been received about the Jangalis, General Macdonogh said that reinforcements, *e.g.*, the remainder of 14th Hussars and a field battery, were moving up the Hamadan road.

Mr. Montagu said that he thought it quite right that we should maintain a mobile column on the road. As regards increasing

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this force there appeared, owing to the difficulty of supply, to be only two alternatives; either to have no more troops there, or to have a comparatively immobile force which would not be dependent upon petrol.

General Smuts agreed that the line should be strengthened. Marling was in a difficult position, as the Persian Government knew our weakness and could afford, at present, to laugh at him.

General Cox said that a mobile force on the road was most essential if we intended to try and watch the capital 100 miles away. It was, however, quite right that our first objective should be the Caspian.

The Chairman said he agreed with Mr. Montagu, and thought that General Marshall should be instructed to push up an infantry force, even if it were only a battalion, either to Kermanshah or Hamadan in order to steady the situation.

The Committee agreed that it was desirable to strengthen, without delay, the Hamadan cordon, but decided that General Marshall's reply to War Office telegram 61196 M.O.2 of the 28th June (E.C. 653) should be awaited before instructions in regard to this should be sent to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia.

The Situation in South Persia.

General Macdonogh referred to the last paragraph of Sir C. Marling's telegram of the 1st July (E C.-691) which said that as regards the possibility of making an advance from Bushire, the forcing of passes on the Shiraz road is, according to all military opinion, a very formidable undertaking, and while Marling recognised the full importance of doing anything to relieve Sir P. Sykes at Shiraz, on the possibility of which the military authorities would pronounce, he (Marling) would prefer to see the troops available for the purpose sent to Bundar Abbas rather than run undue risk of failure. This was the view which had been taken from the start by the War Office and by the Eastern Committee. It was the Commander-in-Chief in India who had insisted on sending the force to Bushire.

The Committee decided that—

The Commander-in-Chief in India should be asked his views as to Sir C. Marling's recommendation, and the War Office should take the necessary action to obtain them.

Our Policy in Persia.

Mr. Montagu confessed that Marling's telegram of the 1st July left him rather pessimistic. The message was not hopeful in tone, nor did it disclose the right spirit. Marling evidently lacked enthusiasm to carry out successfully the policy which the Committee advised.

Lord Robert Cecil said that the line taken by Marling was that nothing could be done, that no policy could be carried out without a strong military force to back it, and that concessions were of no use at all.

The Chairman pointed out that Marling had only lately adopted this view; earlier in the day he had advocated diplomatic measures and even an alliance. He agreed with Mr. Montagu that Marling appeared to have turned down the Committee's policy without giving it due consideration.

General Macdonogh said that Sir C. Marling was never satisfied with what we were doing and was always altering his mind. He himself suggested that it would be wise to withdraw him and send another man. He felt that our policy should be unified as far as possible and that we should have one man to control our military policy throughout Persia. Military operations in Mesopotamia were conducted by General Marshall, who, in turn, was guided in matters of policy, by Sir P. Cox. General Macdonogh thought that the sphere of this latter officer might well be extended to include Persia, and that Sir P. Cox might be sent to replace the Minister at Teheran.

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Spheres of Military and Political Control.

Mr. Montagu said that he was in full accord with the views of the Government of India regarding the spheres of control as expressed in the Viceroy's telegram of the 1st July (E.C.–694). This telegram stated that it was assumed that by "control" was meant "military control"; that, if so, "political control" was an essential corollary; in Bushire, however, local political control was an impossibility; the Persian political centre was Teheran, and, in spite of its material weakness, the Persian Government exercised a surprising authority throughout the country; the Indian Government felt, therefore, that so long as they had no voice in the direction of Teheran policy, they would, in accepting the spheres of control allotted to them in Persia, be accepting grave military responsibility without authority to regulate the political situation within their spheres, or the direction in which our forces should be used. Mr. Montagu said that when it was decided by the Committee that the military spheres under the War Office and under the India Office were to be North and South Persia respectively, he had pointed out that political difficulties would arise. He thought that as a *war measure* we should have a Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran, appointed by, and working under, the Government of India and acting in concert with the military commander. It had been pointed out at the 16th Meeting of the Committee that the Persian Government distrusted Indian officials as being bureaucratic and unsympathetic. Colonel Stokes, however, was surely an exception, and he understood him to be both popular with, and trusted by, the Persians. As he had stated, he always maintained that military and political control must go together. To-day, in North Persia, we were facing west in order to meet the invaders, and in South Persia we were endeavouring to control unruly tribesmen. The troops for both purposes were being supplied from India, and the Indian Government naturally said: "Why should we give our men and our money to the prosecution of a policy of which we disapprove?" He attached great importance to two things, first, to securing a friendly Persian Government, and second, to making proper provision for the control of military operations in the enormous war area which was now being unfolded. He felt strongly on the dangers of over-centralisation; he did not see how control could properly be exercised from London, and unless we took steps at once to decentralise by building up in Baghdad or Teheran, or some suitable place, a central authority of control, we were in danger of a breakdown. He would like to see a new military area marked out to include theatres of war east of the Mediterranean. India had pressed long ago for a policy of concession *vis-à-vis* the Persian Government. He himself believed that our present difficulties in Persia were due to over-centralisation of political control, and he was afraid that in later days, when the history of the Committee and its decisions came to be examined, the Committee might not emerge from the ordeal with credit.

The Chairman said that the question of our political control in Persia had been thrashed out by the Welby Commission at great length some years ago, and, after prolonged discussion, the present division of functions between the Home and the Indian Governments had been accepted. By "control," he himself had meant "military control," and he understood this to have been intended by the Committee. Hitherto "political control" had been centred at Teheran, which was the pivot of the diplomatic system, and he did not think it was possible to change this to-day. As regards the suggestion that Sir P. Cox might control policy in Persia, we had no means of knowing what policy Cox, if he were placed in that position, would adopt. Our own policy had been to back Vossugh, and this was only said to have failed because we had not sufficient military force behind it; at least this was Marling's view. As regards the suggestion that it might be advisable to replace our political repre-

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sentative at Teheran, he thought that this question must stand over until the return of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He himself felt that it was impossible to accept the proposal that Teheran should be placed under the Government of India. The idea would be intensely unpopular with the Persians themselves, at the very moment when we were endeavouring to conciliate their friendship. In regard to the Government of India's telegram, he thought that a reply should be sent to the effect that the Committee had considered its contents most carefully, but were of opinion that, in the present circumstances, it was impossible to make the change they suggested. The existing system had worked fairly well for many years; to upset it now because the South Persia Rifles had mutinied or deserted in one part of Persia would be, to say the least of it, premature.

Lord Robert Cecil said that Marling's so-called vacillation was no doubt due to the fact that the situation changed so rapidly. He himself would be sorry to see Stokes as our representative at Teheran. Stokes's recommendation, "Rely on the Nationalist party," was a ntastic. Another policy was to get Vossugh into power, back him up by force, and then show the country how valuable that backing was. This was Marling's policy, but it required military force behind it. Stokes would have us rule through the Democrats, whereas our policy, which was one of concession, was to get in Vossugh's Cabinet. At first sight he thought there was something to be said for the suggestion that Sir P. Cox should replace Sir C. Marling; but it was for the Committee to decide what line they should take in regard to military and political control. He did not think that it was desirable, from a broad military point of view, to adopt Mr. Montagu's suggestion to build up a second centre of authority. Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Persia were all parts of a big whole, and he viewed with something approaching consternation the Secretary of State for India's suggestion of having a separate centre in Baghdad or India. There appeared to be three lines of action: (*a*) to leave the control in London; (*b*) put the control under the Government of India; (*c*) put the military control under the War Office and the political control under the Indian Government. He agreed, however, with the Chairman as to the nature of the reply to be sent to India.

General Smuts said that they must watch carefully to see where was the military centre of gravity in the Middle East. He thought the situation was developing very quickly and very seriously in North-West Persia. The Committee must take a broad view and not regard the question as mainly an Indian matter only. If India refused to take over military control in South and East Persia, the only alternative appeared to be to put these areas under the War Office. Briefly, he thought that the political control at Teheran must remain in this country and not be handed over to India; and that, as regards military control, the alternative was that the control of the whole of the areas should rest in the hands of the War Office. India, however, maintained that political and military control must go together, and this view was endorsed by the Secretary of State for India.

Mr. Shuckburgh understood that India's position was to be that as they had no voice in the policy at Teheran, they thought it hardly reasonable that they should be asked to accept responsibility for military control without any authority to regulate the political situation. What India wished us to do was to adopt a conciliatory policy at Teheran, *i.e.*, to work in with the democrats.

The Chairman and Lord Robert Cecil agreed that this, for the present, was impossible, though it might come later.

Mr. Montagu then read out the following draft reply to the Indian Government, *which was accepted by the Committee*:—

"Viceroy, Foreign Department, dated the 4th July, 1918.
"(Foreign Secret.)
"Your telegram of the 1st July: Spheres of control.
"Our telegram of the 25th ultimo referred only to military control. His Majesty's Government do not understand how it

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is possible to arrange a political control coterminous with the area suggested for your military control. What exactly do you mean by a voice in direction of Teheran policy ?"

Situation in South Persia.

3. Mr. Montagu raised the question whether it were possible to send reinforcements to relieve the Abadeh situation by the Lynch road.

General Macdonogh said he was doubtful whether this was possible. He thought, however, we might perhaps induce the Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari to help us. The Ilkhani had just defeated the Kuhgelus and might be willing to assist us. It looked at present as if the Kashgais were not over keen to go on, and they seemed to be quarrelling with Wassmuss.

The Chairman said he was doubtful if the Ilkhani would be willing to fight the Kashgais, as this would involve him in a long feud with that tribe.

The Committee decided—

That the War Office should be asked to telegraph to General Marshall to enquire if he thought that any use could be made of the Bakhtiaris in order to relieve the situation, either at Isfahan or Abadeh.

Aeroplanes for India.

4. Mr. Montagu said that it might be advisable to supplement the number of bombing machines at present available in India for use on the North West frontier of India, in view of possible eventualities.

General Smuts thought that in case of emergency these might be supplied from Egypt.

General Cox pointed out that machines for India had to be specially constructed, and that consequently reinforcements of this arm could not be improvised.

General Macdonogh added that machines for the North West frontier would have to be long-range machines. He thought that the best thing would be for the India Office to approach the Air Ministry direct on the subject.

The Chairman said that several Indian Princes in contributing towards the expense of the war had expressly desired that their gifts should be devoted to the provision of air-craft. He thought that the India Office might suggest to the Air Ministry that at least an equivalent number of modern aeroplanes of a suitable type should now be placed at the disposal of the Indian Government.

The Committee decided—

To authorise the Secretary of State for India to approach the Air Ministry in the above sense, and to state in his communication that the Eastern Committee regarded the provision of additional air-craft for India as very important, in view of possible developments.

Baku and the Caucasus.

5. General Macdonogh said that the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, had asked (E.C.–674) whether he should authorise General Dunsterville to destroy the oil-fields, as the instructions he had received only mentioned pumping plant, pipe-lines, and oil reserves.

The Chairman pointed out that the War Office telegram of the 20th June to General Marshall (E.C. 653) had stated "If we can get complete control of Caspian shipping, destroy the Baku pumping plant, pipe-line, and oil reservoirs, we shall have obtained our present object." The Committee at their 13th Meeting, Minute 1,

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had decided that the War Office should telegraph to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, instructing him to tell Dunsterville to arrange, if possible, to destroy the reservoirs and pipe-lines. The idea of attempting to destroy the oil-fields had had to be rejected, as it seemed impossible to do this effectively with the means at our disposal, and the cost of compensation, if it were decided that this were necessary, was prohibitive. At their 14th Meeting, Minute 3, the Committee had decided that their instructions to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, should stand.

General Macdonogh thought that it had been understood that all the necessary preparations for destruction should be made, but that the demolition should not be actually carried out without His Majesty's Government's sanction.

The Committee decided:—

That the War Office should be instructed to telegraph to General Marshall to the effect that their original instructions held good, and that the time and means of demolishing the reservoirs, plant, and pipe-lines, if these were likely to fall into the hands of the enemy, were left to General Dunsterville's discretion.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
July 4, 1918.

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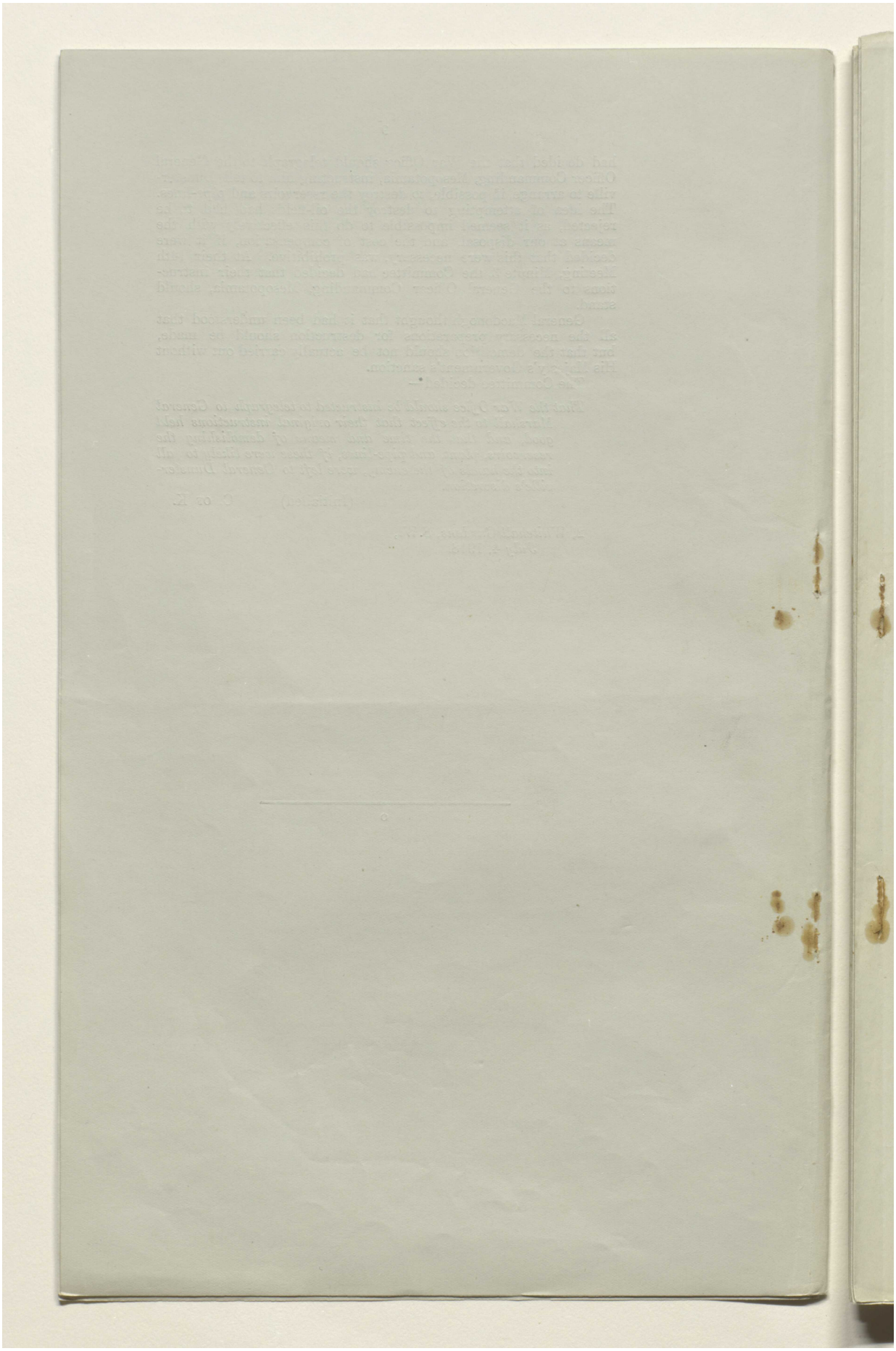

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Lord Curzon.

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Printed for the War Cabinet. July 1918.

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E.C. 19th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, July 11, 1918, *at* 5·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE of PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Sir MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:

Mr. DUDLEY WARD, C.B.E., Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Payment of the Cossack Division.

1. THE Committee had before them a copy of a telegram No. 610 from Sir C. Marling (E.C.–763), stating that a demonstration, involving the closing of the bazaars, and offering armed resistance to any attempt by the Government to open them forcibly, was started on the night of the 4th July, but had been immediately suppressed. Marling drew attention to the fact that the Cossack division, which was paid by us, had been used to crush a political agitation against a Cabinet unfriendly to us. The Officer Commanding the Cossacks had been placed in a peculiarly difficult position, and it was not easy to see how he could have acted otherwise than he did. The question arose whether it was worth while our continuing to pay a force that could be used against us; and it had been suggested to Marling by his Persian friends that we should threaten the Shah to stop paying his Guard unless he dismissed the present Cabinet in favour of Vossugh. Marling, however, did not recommend this; he thought the threat would fall flat, and would, further, rouse the latent Anglophobia of Russians all over Northern Persia into activity, while, with a friendly Cabinet in office, some use could still be made of the force.

General Macdonogh submitted a paper (E.C.–784) which had been prepared in the War Office with reference to the above

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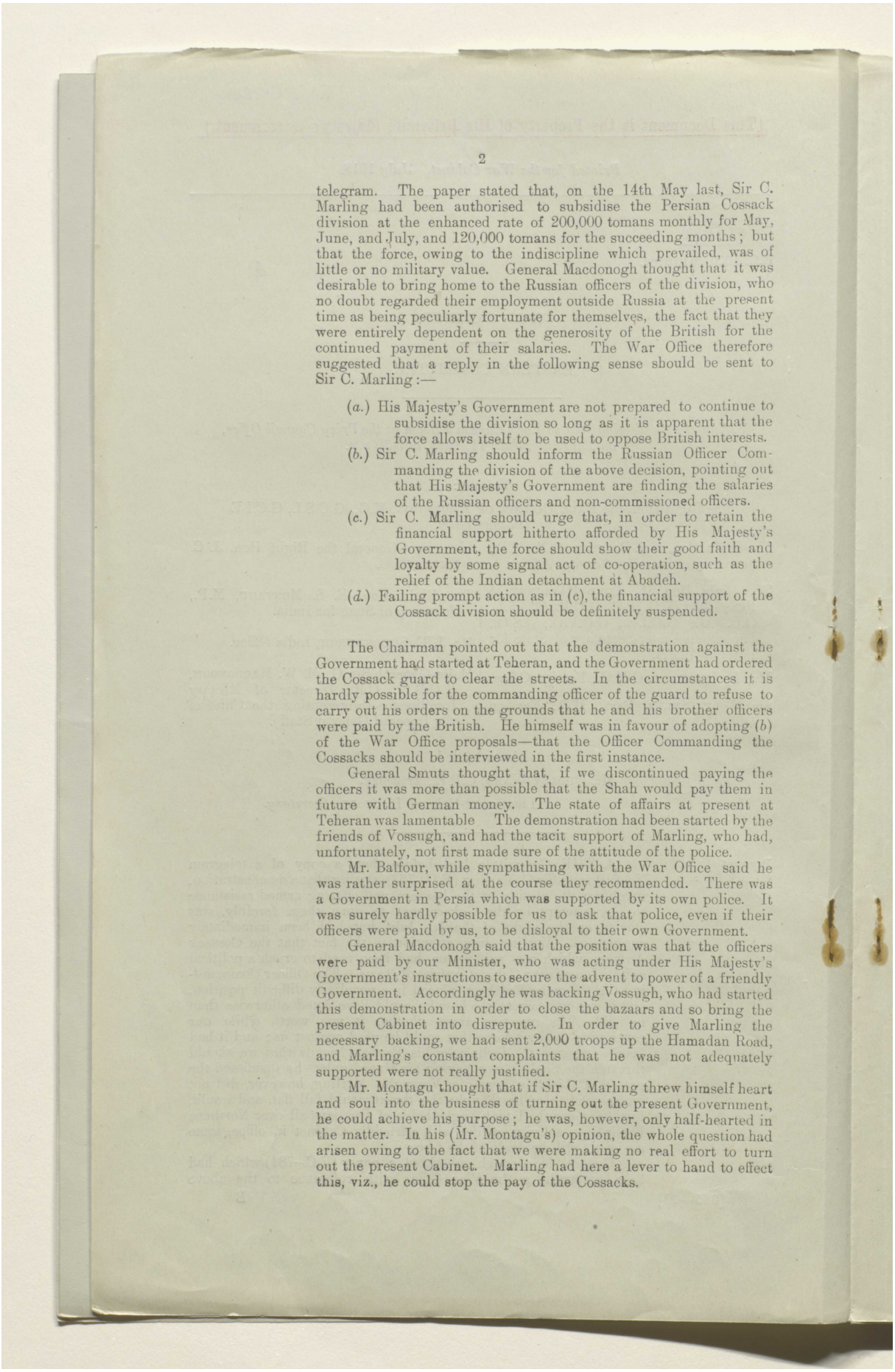

telegram. The paper stated that, on the 14th May last, Sir C. Marling had been authorised to subsidise the Persian Cossack division at the enhanced rate of 200,000 tomans monthly for May, June, and July, and 120,000 tomans for the succeeding months; but that the force, owing to the indiscipline which prevailed, was of little or no military value. General Macdonogh thought that it was desirable to bring home to the Russian officers of the division, who no doubt regarded their employment outside Russia at the present time as being peculiarly fortunate for themselves, the fact that they were entirely dependent on the generosity of the British for the continued payment of their salaries. The War Office therefore suggested that a reply in the following sense should be sent to Sir C. Marling:—

(*a.*) His Majesty's Government are not prepared to continue to subsidise the division so long as it is apparent that the force allows itself to be used to oppose British interests.

(*b.*) Sir C. Marling should inform the Russian Officer Commanding the division of the above decision, pointing out that His Majesty's Government are finding the salaries of the Russian officers and non-commissioned officers.

(*c.*) Sir C. Marling should urge that, in order to retain the financial support hitherto afforded by His Majesty's Government, the force should show their good faith and loyalty by some signal act of co-operation, such as the relief of the Indian detachment at Abadeh.

(*d.*) Failing prompt action as in (*c*), the financial support of the Cossack division should be definitely suspended.

The Chairman pointed out that the demonstration against the Government had started at Teheran, and the Government had ordered the Cossack guard to clear the streets. In the circumstances it is hardly possible for the commanding officer of the guard to refuse to carry out his orders on the grounds that he and his brother officers were paid by the British. He himself was in favour of adopting (*b*) of the War Office proposals—that the Officer Commanding the Cossacks should be interviewed in the first instance.

General Smuts thought that, if we discontinued paying the officers it was more than possible that the Shah would pay them in future with German money. The state of affairs at present at Teheran was lamentable The demonstration had been started by the friends of Vossugh, and had the tacit support of Marling, who had, unfortunately, not first made sure of the attitude of the police.

Mr. Balfour, while sympathising with the War Office said he was rather surprised at the course they recommended. There was a Government in Persia which was supported by its own police. It was surely hardly possible for us to ask that police, even if their officers were paid by us, to be disloyal to their own Government.

General Macdonogh said that the position was that the officers were paid by our Minister, who was acting under His Majesty's Government's instructions to secure the advent to power of a friendly Government. Accordingly he was backing Vossugh, who had started this demonstration in order to close the bazaars and so bring the present Cabinet into disrepute. In order to give Marling the necessary backing, we had sent 2,000 troops up the Hamadan Road, and Marling's constant complaints that he was not adequately supported were not really justified.

Mr. Montagu thought that if Sir C. Marling threw himself heart and soul into the business of turning out the present Government, he could achieve his purpose; he was, however, only half-hearted in the matter. In his (Mr. Montagu's) opinion, the whole question had arisen owing to the fact that we were making no real effort to turn out the present Cabinet. Marling had here a lever to hand to effect this, viz., he could stop the pay of the Cossacks.

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The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should reply to Sir C. Marling, pointing out the very serious view taken by His Majesty's Government of the present situation and instructing him to interview the Officer Commanding the Cossack division on the lines suggested by the War Office and report to the Foreign Office. If the force continued to be used in a manner hostile to us, Sir C. Marling should be given discretionary power to stop payment of the officers and N.C.O's.

The Addition to the Committee of a Representative of the Ministry of Information.

2. The Committee had before them copy of a letter, dated the 29th June (E.C.–741), from Mr. Gaselee of the Ministry of Information, to Sir Mark Sykes, saying that Lord Beaverbrook considered it desirable that the Ministry of Information should have a representative on the Eastern Committee, and suggesting for the purpose the name of Mr. Cunliffe Owen. Appended to the above letter was a memorandum to Lord Curzon by Sir Mark Sykes, pointing out that the Eastern Committee only decides on questions of policy; and that Mr. Shuckburgh, Mr. Oliphant, and himself were usually the agents through which the Committee deals with particular individuals and affairs connected with the Committee's work. In Sir Mark's view, the best plan would be for Mr. Owen to keep in touch, in regard to work in their respective spheres, with the three said officials, who could report to their immediate superiors in questions of administration and through them to the Eastern Committee on questions of policy. As regards propaganda, Sir Mark's view was: (*a*) In Turkey and Arabia there is something to be done; (*b*) in Persia he could not see what could be done; (*c*) in India and Afghanistan the Indian Government alone could decide what could be done and alone would be qualified to do so; (*d*) in Turkestan and Siberia no one could advise as to what would be possible in this direction; (*e*) in China and Japan only a local agent could act; (*f*) in Burma, Siam, and Cochin China there was very little worth doing; and (*g*) Ceylon would come under the same category as India.

General Macdonogh gave certain particulars in regard to Mr. Cunliffe Owen's qualifications for propaganda work. He said that he had seen Sir Wm. Tyrrell, Mr. Owen, and others, and the idea was that Colonel Keyes (E.C. 10th Meeting, Minute 5), on his return from Stockholm should be in charge of propaganda in Persia and Turkestan. Mr. Owen had no knowledge of Turkey and Persia as most of his time had been spent in the Far East. The suggestion was that Mr. Owen should be Lord Beaverbrook's representative, with Keyes under him as an expert in Middle Eastern affairs.

The Chairman said that the Committee decided at their 10th Meeting that the Committee could not itself undertake propaganda in the East, although it would exercise general control, but that such work should be conducted by the Ministry of Information in consultation with the Foreign Office and the India Office, who would refer to the Committee if advice or instructions were required. He himself saw no ground for having a representative of the Ministry on the Committee, which was concerned with policy, not with propaganda.

Mr. Balfour said that he agreed with Lord Curzon and also generally with Sir Mark Sykes' paper. He felt, however, that propaganda among Central Asian Moslems must be conducted from India.

The Chairman agreed, but pointed out the extreme difficulty of obtaining access to Turkestan from India, there being only four channels of entrance, viz., by the Karakoram and Kashgar, through the Pamirs, and through Afghanistan, and viâ Seistan and Meshed;

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of these the second and third were entirely closed ; the first and last were very long and circuitous.

Mr. Montagu said that he, too, was of opinion that it was not necessary to have a representative of the Ministry on the Committee. As a matter of fact, India had asked to be placed in direct touch with the Ministry of Information, and his department had replied that such touch must be maintained through the India Office. He himself would be quite prepared to work in with and make use of Mr. Owen, on the condition that the Indian Government should make their own arrangements in regard to propaganda, that is to say, that Mr. Owen would supply films, leaflets, &c., as they might be required, and that the rest should be left to the Indian Government. He thought that a reply should be sent to the Minister of Information to the effect that the Committee had considered the proposal, but were unable to accept it, and that the best thing would be for his department to get into touch with the Foreign Office, India Office, and the War Office.

The Committee decided—

That Sir Mark Sykes should draft, and submit for the Chairman's approval, a reply to Mr. Gaselee on the general lines of his memorandum to Lord Curzon.

Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

3. The Chairman said that the members of the Committee had only received just before the meeting a memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes reporting on his private and personal conference with M. Georges Picot (E.C.–766), in which the whole of the situation in regard to the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 had been reviewed. Attached to this report were two Papers which had been jointly prepared by M. Picot and Sir Mark Sykes. Paper "A" was a suggested declaration to the King of the Hedjaz, put forward as a method of dealing directly with the Arab difficulty. Paper "B" was designed to clarify the position of France and Great Britain in regard to the oppressed peoples of the Ottoman Empire ; and in the opinion of M. Picot and Sir Mark Sykes, if the two Governments had an exchange of views on the lines set forth in that Paper, they would then have a logical basis for their future policy.

The Chairman said that the memorandum raised important questions. It had, however, been received too late to be studied by the Committee before the meeting, and he suggested that it should be considered at their next meeting.

Mr. Balfour agreed and suggested that members, when studying this Paper, should bear in mind the following considerations : The Italians were exceedingly jealous of anything that we and the French did in concert, and this factor could not be neglected. On the other hand, M. Picot, according to the Italians, passed as an accredited French official in Palestine, while the Italians were not accorded a similar privilege. Again, the Italians had never forgiven the British Government for making the Sykes-Picot Agreement without letting the Italians know anything about it for a very considerable period. Accordingly, we should come to no arrangements with the French Government without keeping the Italians *au courant* with what was being done. Moreover, from a selfish point of view, if we invariably kept the Italians informed, we could almost certainly rely on their support when we were in diplomatic difficulties with the French. Our object apparently now was to destroy the Sykes-Picot Agreement. If, however, we were to remain in tutelary possession of Mesopotamia, and the French remained in tutelary possession of Palestine and Syria at the end of the war, while the Italians enjoyed no similar advantages in Asia, endless difficulties would be raised.

Sir Mark Sykes said he had discussed the question with M. Picot, who had suggested that when he, M. Picot, went back to Syria, he should be High Commissioner and Adviser on Franco-

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Palestinian affairs and that the Italians should have a complementary representative to be the Adviser for Italo-Palestinian affairs. If the British advanced into the French sphere and set up a civil administration, in which the French were not associated with us, there would be trouble. The War Cabinet had decided that when a civil administration was set up in Palestine, M. Picot should be associated with us in it.

The Chairman had no recollection of such a decision.

Lord Hardinge thought that all that the War Cabinet* had decided was that when there was a civil administration in Palestine, it would be international.

General Macdonogh said that M. Picot's desire was to become French Political Adviser to the British General as we advanced into Syria.

General Smuts thought it was impossible to agree to this.

The Committee decided—

To defer the discussion of Sir Mark Sykes' Paper until their next Meeting.

The King of Hedjaz and Ibn Saud.

4. The attention of the Committee was invited to two telegrams from Sir R. Wingate, Nos. 1050 and 1055, of the 9th July, 1918 (E.C.–769 and E.C.–770), stating that the relations between King Hussein and Ibn Saud were becoming increasingly strained and might lead to hostility by their respective adherents or even to an open rupture. Sir Reginald suggested that an identic message should be sent to King Hussein and Ibn Saud; that the King's son, Abdulla, should be recalled to Mecca; and that, until we were able to make a more definite statement of policy as regards the future of the Arabian Peninsula, we could only maintain our temporising attitude and urge all parties to put aside local disputes until the the Turks had been defeated.

Sir Mark Sykes said he had prepared an alternative message to that suggested by the High Commissioner. He also pressed the desirability of a British officer being attached to Ibn Saud to act in the same capacity that Colonel Wilson acted towards King Hussein.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that, if the Committee decided in favour of the latter suggestion, a telegram would be sent to Sir P. Cox and repeated to the Indian Government asking that a suitable officer should be selected and sent out to Ibn Saud

The Chairman drew the attention of the Committee to some valuable notes on Ibn Saud, prepared by Colonel Hamilton, Political Agent at Koweit, some months ago (E.C.–745).

The Committee decided—

That the question was one which might be left to the Foreign Office to decide.†

Movements of Sir G. Macartney.

5. Mr. Shuckburgh briefly summarised a telegram from Sir G. Macartney, dated the 19th June, 1918, which had been forwarded by the Viceroy on the 8th July (E.C.–757). Macartney was leaving India shortly, and he thought he might do useful work by taking the Tashkend route instead of the Indian route. He would be accompanied by Major Bailey as far as Tashkend, whence he

* *Note by the Secretary.*—At their 308th Meeting on the 31st December, 1917, attention was called to the recrudescence of French demands for political rights in Palestine. . . . . It was further pointed out that the French military contribution in Palestine had been extremely small, and that, for the present, at any rate, it was absolutely essential to continue the military government of occupied territory. It would seem that the French entertained the immediate hope of an International or Inter-Allied Commission, with a Frenchman at the head of it, to take over political interests in Palestine, and more particularly of the Holy Places.

No decision was arrived at by the War Cabinet on the matter.

† *Note.*—A copy of the telegram sent by the Foreign Office as the result of this discussion is printed as an Appendix to these Minutes.

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proposed to make for Moscow, and would proceed, preferably, viâ Archangel or Romanof, or, if not feasible, then through Vladivostock. The Indian Government considered the proposal sound, and asked that, if His Majesty's Government concurred, the Foreign Office should arrange for such facilities for the journey as might be possible. Mr. Shuckburgh said that his department were prepared to support the proposal, if the Foreign Office had no objection to Macartney's returning through European Russia

Mr. Balfour said that the Foreign Office were apprehensive of any British officers at the present time, who might get into Russia, being murdered or detained as hostages; and, consequently, he deprecated the journey which would certainly be dangerous, and probably embarrassing to us.

The Chairman suggested as an alternative that, after leaving Bailey at Tashkend, Macartney should proceed viâ Samarcand, the Trans-Caspian road, Meshed, and Teheran. He thought that he might gather a considerable amount of valuable information on his way.

The Committee agreed that it was desirable that Sir G. Macartney should not return through Russia, but that the Trans-Caspian route should be suggested to him; and asked the India Office to reply to the Indian Government accordingly.

The Hamadan Road.

6. The Committee took note of the replies which had been received to War Office telegram 61196 of 28th June, from the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, viz., his telegrams X. 9987, 4th July (E.C.–715) and X. 65 of the 6th July (E.C.–747).

General Macdonogh drew the attention of the Committee to the stress laid by General Marshall upon his difficulties in keeping a force fed and equipped in Persia. In General Marshall's opinion it was improbable that a larger force than that now either in Persia, or under orders to proceed there, could be maintained in that country; and, as at least for five months in winter the road would not be practicable except for light traffic, it would be necessary to obtain locally, and accumulate, a reserve of supplies. Secondly, that unless it could be obtained from Baku, the supply of petrol would present great difficulties. General Marshall also referred to the difficulties attending both the supplies of clothing and equipment, and the medical arrangements.

Baku and the Caucasus.

7. General Macdonogh explained, with a map, the situation in the Caucasus, according to the latest information. There was a report to the effect that Azerbaijan had been declared independent, and that Nuri, Enver's brother, had been proclaimed Sultan. The 5th Caucasus division was still at or near Elizabetopol. The Armenians, however, appeared to be stronger than we thought, and Madame Essayan, in a message dated Enzeli, 30th June (E.C.–759), said that they were keeping in check all three Turkish divisions. The Turks at Tabriz were confining themselves to reconnoitring in the direction of Shabli Pass, which seemed to indicate that they were not at present prepared to push forward. General Dunsterville was now in touch with the Jelus by means of two aeroplanes, and he was sending them up arms and ammunition which were to be handed over at Bijar on the 23rd July. Bicharakoff was at Baku and had assumed control of the Bolshevik forces at that place. Mr. McDonnell reported (E.C.–739) that a secret committee had been formed by the local Bolshevik Government to go into the question of oil destruction. There was no further news about the Caspian fleet. The Treasury had agreed to pay the 6,000,000 roubles a month to Bicharakoff. A small detachment of about 110 Indian troops had moved from Kasvin on to Resht. There had been a

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little fighting with some Jangalis on the road. On the previous day the War Office had telegraphed to the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, instructing him to send up two naval officers to Enzeli in order to secure the two gun-boats.

Trans-Caspia and Russian Turkestan.

8. General Macdonogh said that a telegram, No. M.D. 163, dated the 7th July, from Redl, had been transmitted through the C.-in-C., India (E.C.–764), saying that Djunkovski, the father of an officer known to Dunsterville and at Teheran, wished to take 200,000 roubles with him for current expenses. As the telegram said that Teague Jones was engaged at present on the very difficult task of ascertaining definite means of getting explosives across the Russian frontier and conveying them secretly to a convenient spot, it was assumed that this money was required in connection with the destruction of the Trans-Caspian Railway. The War Office had sanctioned provisionally this expenditure.

Mr. Montagu thought that perhaps the money might not be wanted so much for the destruction of the railway as for propaganda purposes.

The Chairman thought that as we now had missions in Trans-Caspia, and it might be very desirable to maintain communication with the Caspian, it would be a mistake to demolish the railway prematurely.

General Macdonogh referred to further telegrams from Major Redl stating that unsatisfactory reports had been received from Captain Jarvis, and he thought, therefore, that we must be prepared to interrupt the railway at any moment.

The Committee decided—

That, subject to the approval of His Majesty's Treasury, the above expenditure should be sanctioned.

Our Policy in Persia.

9. The Committee took note of a Paper by the Secretary of State for India, entitled "The War and the East," dated the 5th July, 1918 (E.C.–718), to which was appended a telegram from the Viceroy, dated the 9th July, regarding spheres of control (E.C.–767), which had been circulated just before the meeting.

Mr. Montagu said that he had prepared the paper in accordance with a request that had been made to him at a conference, which had been held at 10, Downing Street, on the 17th June, 1918, on Middle Eastern Affairs (G.T. 4910).

The Committee noted that the Paper invited the Foreign Office and the War Office to submit their considered views on the questions raised by Mr. Montagu.

The Committee decided—

That the reports of the Foreign Office and War Office should be awaited.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*, 1,
July 11, 1918.

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APPENDIX.

Telegram to Sir R. Wingate, Ramleh.

(No. 885.) *Foreign Office, July* 15, 1918.

YOUR telegram No. 1050 of 9th July: King Hussein and Bin Saoud.
Following telegram has been addressed to Bagdad:—

"Cairo telegram No. 1050 of 9th July: Bin Saoud.
"His Majesty's Government consider that no effort should be spared to lessen friction and prevent hostilities between Bin Saoud and King Hussein. Please arrange to despatch suitable British officer to Bin Saoud at earliest possible moment with message in following terms:—

(R.) "'I am charged by my Government to deliver to you this message of friendship and good-will, even as my colleague, Colonel Wilson, has been charged to deliver the same message to King of Hedjaz:—

"'"His Majesty's Government note with regret that the letters exchanged between the two great leaders of the Arabian people show that there is between them a danger of serious misunderstanding. Should there cease to be friendship between them a calamity would threaten the whole Arab people, and there would be no advantage to any but those who wish them ill. His Majesty's Government appeal to both to show wisdom and forbearance. A common enemy threatens the independence of the Arabs. How often have the Arabs lost their independence, because, being disunited, they were defeated by a Power which could not otherwise have conquered them! In this age of world war, misunderstanding between the Arabs would not only help the enemy to rob the Arabs of the liberties they have won, but would impede the efforts which His Majesty's Government are making to free the rest of the Arabs who are still under the yoke of the Turkish oppressor. His Majesty's Government are ready and willing to give any help to the two great Arab leaders which will assist them in coming to an agreement by negotiation."' (End of R.)

"Cairo is being similarly instructed in regard to King Hussein. His Majesty's Government consider that British officer who takes message should, if possible, remain with Bin Saoud for the present. They think it important in these critical times to have someone constantly at hand to advise and restrain Emir with special object of keeping peace between him and King Hussein, and if possible promoting rapprochement between them. It is for consideration whether the two chiefs could not be induced to send representatives to some neutral locality with a view to negotiating engagement to refrain from hostilities. We should be glad to have Cox's views on this point or on any other action that he thinks it would be feasible to take. In the event of the adoption of our suggestion we should like to be informed of the name of the officer deputed by you.
"(Addressed to Bagdad, repeated Viceroy.)"

Please instruct Colonel Wilson to deliver to King Hussein the message contained therein.

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Lord Curzon.

(67)

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E.C. 20th Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, July 15, 1918, at 5.30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Minister of Blockade.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid.

1. The Chairman said that according to a telegram, A.B. 925, dated the 11th July, from the Arab Bureau (E.C.–795), Ibn Saud's followers, numbering about 5,000, were expected to start about the 22nd June on a harrying expedition against Shammar, and that Ibn Saud, who would be accompanied by Philby, would probably assume command in person at the beginning of this month. A telegram had been circulated just before the meeting from the Acting Political Officer at Baghdad, No. 5841, dated the 15th July (E.C.–812), saying that he had posted to the Government of India and to Cairo on the 9th July a lengthy communication received from Philby, dated the 25th June, summarising the situation in Central Arabia. Philby reported that Ibn Saud had already given a solemn undertaking that no aggressive action would be taken by the people of Khurmah pending a reply from the Government to the representations made on his behalf by Philby, who was remaining with him. The Acting Political Officer urged that no message should be addressed to either party until Philby's report had been received and considered by the Government of India, Sir P. Cox, and the High Commissioner at Cairo. The telegram concluded with a suggestion that if it was decided eventually to address an identic communication to the two parties, the form suggested by Sir R. Wingate (E.C.–769) was more likely to make the desired impression than that contained in India Office telegram of the 13th July (E.C.–817).

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Sir Mark Sykes explained that Khurmah was the place where the two opposing forces would most probably join battle.

General Macdonogh said that what the War Office desired was, if possible, to prevent any trouble between Ibn Saud and the King of the Hedjaz. He suggested that a telegram might be sent enquiring what concessions or promises would be likely to placate Ibn Saud and induce him to break off the threatened expedition. He thought that the matter might be settled more or less on the lines suggested by Sir Mark Sykes in his Paper (E.C.–766) on the subject of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

The Committee decided—

That Philby's report should be awaited.

The Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

2. The Committee resumed the discussion of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916, which had been adjourned at the previous meeting (E.C., 19th Meeting, Minute 3).

Sir Mark Sykes asked that the discussion might be again adjourned, as he was endeavouring to trace a Cabinet decision to which he had referred at the previous meeting. His own two schemes, he said, hung together with our Anglo-French policy in Palestine and Syria. The whole question really depended on M. Picot's position, in regard to which there was some doubt as to what the Government's actual decision had been.

The Chairman said that there were two points he wished to bring to Sir Mark's notice in respect of his memorandum before the discussion was resumed. First, in the reply which His Majesty's Government had sent on the 11th June to the memorial of seven Syrians in Egypt, no disclaimer of annexation had been made, whereas in Sir Mark Sykes' Paper "A" the words "no intention of annexing," which had been introduced, appeared gratuitously to raise the question of Basra. Secondly, in Sir Mark Sykes' Paper "B," paragraph 4, he felt that the phrase "on [the sanction of the free nations of the world" presented an entirely new proposition and was open to serious criticism. The phrase "self-determination" had hitherto been freely employed with regard to the future of States and peoples affected by the war. But the condition that "*the sanction of the free nations of the world*" was requisite would appear to involve a unanimous vote at a Peace Conference or by a League of Nations, if the latter were ever formed.

It was further suggested that, in Sir Mark Sykes' Paper, some other word should be substituted for "tutelage."

The Committee decided—

To resume the discussion at the next meeting.

Trans-Caspia and Turkestan: Meshed and Kashgar Missions.

3. Mr. Shuckburgh said that two questions, which had been raised in the Viceroy's telegram No. 9188 of the 10th July (E.C.–787), required the decision of the Committee. The first dealt with the question of the control of officers sent by Dunsterville to Krasnovodsk. It appeared to the Indian Government that, while Dunsterville's outlook at Enzeli or Baku was westward, the action of our officers at Krasnovodsk must influence, and be influenced by, the military and political condition of Trans-Caspia and Turkestan. For this reason the Government of India preferred that any officers at Krasnovodsk should come under Malleson's orders. Mr. Shuckburgh said that the India Office supported the suggestion of the Government of India.

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The Chairman said that the proposal that the officers should be under Dunsterville was, he understood, a temporary arrangement only, as Dunsterville was on the spot and Malleson had not yet arrived.

General Macdonogh said that the control of these officers, severally, depended again on the command of the Caspian Sea which came within the sphere of the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia. The War Office, however, accepted the suggestion of the Indian Government.

Mr. Balfour thought that any operations on the Caspian should be under the orders of the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, but that east of that sea they should be under the Indian Government.

The Committee decided—

To accept Mr. Balfour's suggestion, and instructed the India Office and War Office to take the necessary action to inform those concerned.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that the second point raised in the Viceroy's telegram was that, as the Meshed Mission was a military Mission, and fell within the sphere of control allotted to India, the Indian Government assumed that communications on the subject would be addressed by the India Office to the Government of India, Army Department; and they wished to be informed definitively whether they would receive the orders of the War Cabinet through the Secretary of State for India or the Secretary of State for War. In any case, in their view, it would be necessary for the Commander-in-Chief to keep the War Office informed of the progress of the Mission, owing to its connection with the present, and possibly prospective, operations. Mr. Shuckburgh said that the view of the India Office was that communications relating to the Mission should be addressed by the Secretary of State for India to the Government of India, and not by the War Office to the Commander-in-Chief.

General Macdonogh said that the War Office concurred, but maintained that purely General Staff matters must still be under the War Office and the Commander-in-Chief in India.

The Committee decided—

To accept General Macdonogh's suggestion, and instructed the War Office to take the necessary action.

General Macdonogh, proceeding, said that two "clear the line" telegrams had been received from the Commander-in-Chief in India forwarding communications from Major Redl. The first one was dated the 10th July (E.C.–796) saying that there was one eventuality which required special consideration, *i.e.*, the possibility of pursuit by the victorious party in the event of either belligerent party crossing the frontier in order to take refuge with our Officer Commanding. The second telegram, dated the 12th July (E.C.–793), stated that on the 11th July Redl had telegraphed that he had been informed by the representative of the Turkestan Union that preparations in Trans-Caspia were less advanced than he had been given to understand, and the previous day the representative had informed Colonel Gustchin, whose assistance in that region he had requested, that he counted on Trans-Caspian elements assembling, and organising and obtaining arms on Persian territory, near Lutfabad. Gustchin had objected that the Persian authorities would eject them; on which the representative had replied that it would be given out that men were being enlisted as partisans of the British, and the organisation would proceed under the British flag until they were ready to act. This, Major Redl pointed out, was a very different matter from the "moral support" which it was understood that our detachment would furnish. Major Redl enquired whether, in the circumstances, the departure of the detachment should be postponed from the 15th July, as had been arranged, until

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after General Malleson's arrival, which would probably be on the 17th July. In forwarding the telegram, the Commander-in-Chief stated that Redl had been told to postpone the departure until the arrival of Malleson. General Macdonogh said that there seemed to be no real object in waiting for Malleson, who would be quite new to the situation, of which Major Redl and General Munro were fully informed. Our intention had been to send up a detachment of 200 men who should go as far as the frontier, at Mohammedabad (near Askabad), as a "moral support." We had, however, sent 200,000 roubles across the frontier to Djunkovski of the Turkestan Union, which was to undertake the destruction of the railway. He thought that if either belligerent party crossed to our side of the frontier, we should give our support to our friends and should restrain the activities of those who were opposed to us, and that the detachment should now be sent forward to the frontier, but not beyond, though he would like to see a Mission despatched into Turkestan itself to organise any force that might be prepared to work in our interest.

The Chairman said that Turkestan and Trans-Caspia were two very different questions, and at present it was with the latter only that we were dealing.

Mr. Montagu submitted a draft reply to the Indian Government in the following sense :—

"Function of force despatched to Perso-Russian frontier is generally to form rallying point for pro-*Entente* parties in Russian territory, and give them all possible assistance and support. In detail officer commanding must be guided by circumstances and by instructions which you give him in pursuance of general object of force. Care should be taken to avoid interference with Afghan subjects.

"As regards specific point raised by Redl in C.-in-C.'s telegram above quoted, assistance should be given to fugitives belonging to party which we have decided to support and pursuit by enemy into Persian territory should be prevented. Organisation of Russian force in Persian territory may be permitted if Redl and Malleson consider it advantageous to us."

The Committee decided—

To authorise the despatch of the above telegram.

Baku and the Caucasus: Submarines in the Caspian.

4. The Committee took note of a Paper from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (E.C.-803), urging that at least one experienced naval officer, as well as sailors with a naval training, should be despatched to the Caspian. There seemed to be good ground for believing that a German submarine might make its way from Lake Ladoga by inland waterways to the Caspian, and thus give the enemy complete control of that sea.

General Macdonogh replied that the Admiralty were already sending up an experienced naval officer to report on the possibility of securing the two gunboats and the fleet on the Caspian, and also on the possible use of submarines in that sea.

The Chairman then read the draft of a telegram which the War Office desired to send to the General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, urging more energetic action if we were to obtain control of the Caspian.

A discussion took place on this draft and it was eventually decided—

That the War Office should be instructed to send the telegram in the following amended form :—

"To G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia (repeated C.-in-C., India).

"Reference your X.-10 of the 4th July forwarding Dunsterville's N.G.-1076 of the 3rd July. Dunsterville seems to

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be drifting into policy of inactivity owing partly to unwillingness to break with Bolsheviks at Enzeli and Baku, partly to his confidence in Bicharakov, which we do not entirely share. If you think prospect feasible, Dunsterville might be authorised to strike at Bolshevik influence at Enzeli by removal of dangerous individuals to Baghdad or elsewhere for repatriation at a later date.

"As regards Baku, if circumstances in your opinion render it desirable or possible with due regard to safety of Hamadan–Enzeli road for Dunsterville to send officers to Baku, or to despatch small force there, we shall be glad to see this done.

"Our information about situation both at Enzeli, Baku, and in Caspian is singularly inadequate. We have been told nothing about position of fleet or about Bicharakov's ships. Situation seems to be less favourable than it was a fortnight ago, and we urge you to press upon Dunsterville imperative necessity of transmitting all information in his power."

Addressed G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia (repeated C.-in-C., India).

Our Policy in Persia.

5. With reference to Eastern Committee, 19th Meeting, Minute 9, the Committee took note of a Memorandum by the War Office (E.C.–809), being a note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on Mr. Montagu's Memorandum, "The War in the East."

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should be requested to expedite their memorandum on this subject in order to enable the Committee to discuss the question at an early date.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
July 15, 1918.

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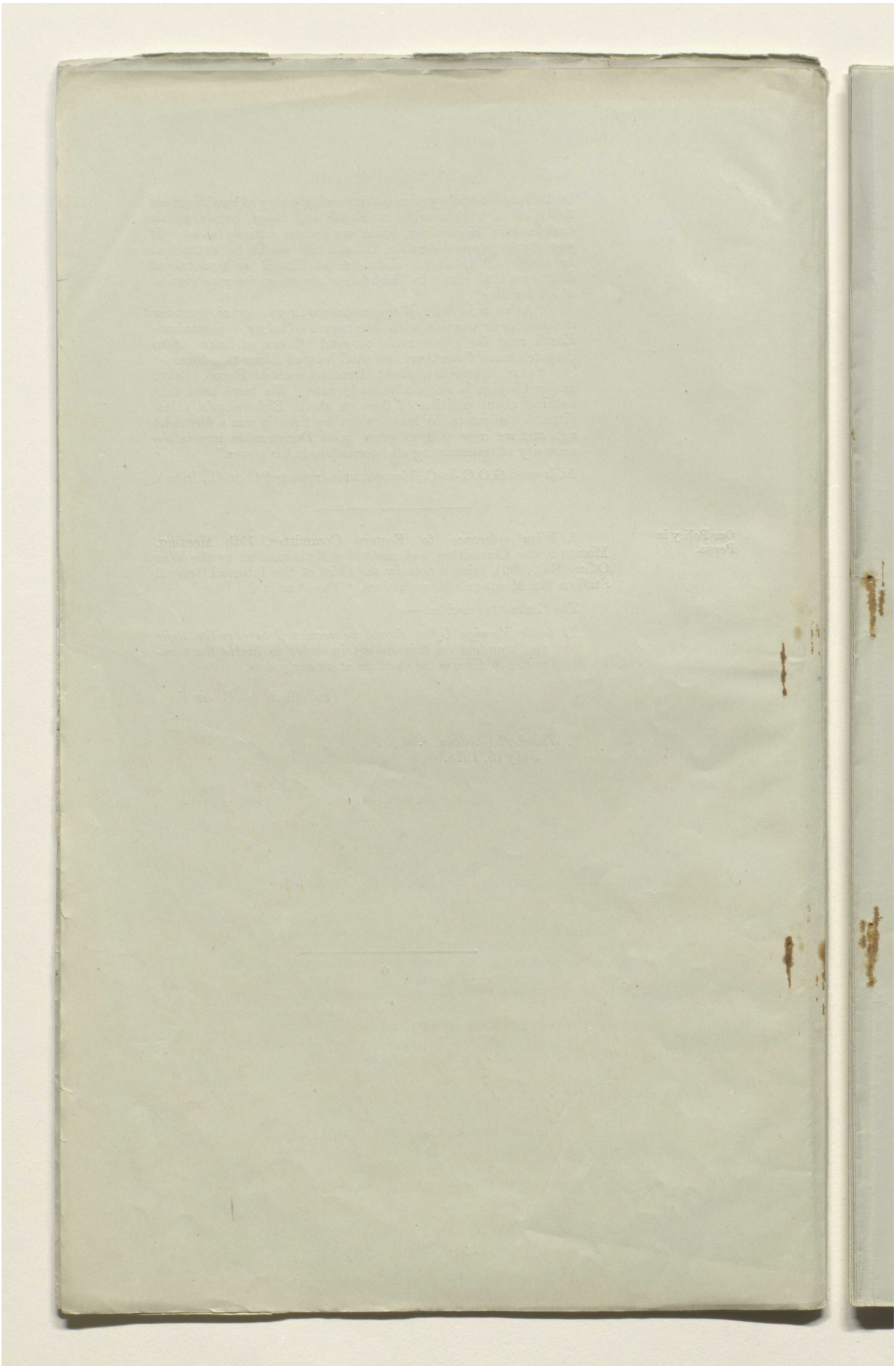

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, July 18, 1918, at 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minute 3).

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Also attended:—

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Advances to the Hejaz.

1. THE Committee had before them a Paper (E.C.–839), in which it was stated that from the summer of 1916 to July 1918, the sum of over 4,500,000*l.* had been advanced to the Shereef, of which over 3,500,000*l.* apparently came from Egypt, and the remainder from Jeddah. Of the 3,500,000*l.* in gold provided by Egypt, 850,000*l.* has been, or is being, repaid in gold. Of the remaining 933,000*l.* provided in Jeddah, 100,000*l.* had apparently been paid in Indian currency notes and 604,000*l.* in gold obtained by the sale of drafts on India; it was not known how the remainder had been provided.

Mr. Keynes said that the Treasury wished to know whether they were to continue to provide gold for the monthly subsidy, or in what other way it should be paid. So much gold had been poured into the Hejaz that the ratio of gold to silver there was now only about

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five to one. Both India and Egypt had given all possible assistance, the former by providing bills and drafts for getting back gold from Jeddah, and the latter by supplying gold out of her own slender resources, which were now becoming exhausted.

Sir Mark Sykes, in reply to a question as to what became of the large quantities of gold which we had sent to the Hejaz, said that a certain amount of it drifted up to Turkey, but the greater part was probably hoarded. The payment of the subsidy in gold maintained our prestige, and he deprecated any alternative which might affect this adversely. He suggested the creation of a smaller gold currency, and further, that part of the subsidy might be paid in kind, viz., in sugar and cotton, if tonnage could be found for the latter. There was a general shortage of silver, or part of the subsidy might be paid in that currency. It was possible that we might eventually have to increase the present subsidy, but he did not see any necessity for paying it all in gold. Whatever happened, it was most necessary that the King of the Hejaz should on no account suspect that we were short of gold.

Mr. Montagu thought that there could be no question of reducing the subsidy. He agreed, however, that some of it should, if possible, be paid in kind. He doubted whether the King would be prepared to accept notes, which might be as unpopular among the Arabs as they were with the Indian Ryots. He suggested that Colonel Wilson should be asked to make discreet enquiries, and let us know whether the King would accept part payment in kind.

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office, in consultation with the Treasury, should telegraph to Sir R. Wingate stating that the continued despatch of gold bullion on so large a scale to the Hejaz is most undesirable if it can by any means be avoided, and inquiring as to the steps which might be taken both to meet the subsidy otherwise than in gold and to increase the amount of gold recoverable from Jeddah.

Shipping Between Akaba and Jeddah.

2. Mr. Keynes said that last May the Admiralty had agreed to put on one boat to ply between Akaba and Jeddah. It now appeared desirable to try and increase the trade between these two ports, with a view more especially to recovering gold from Jeddah, and it was proposed to ask the Admiralty to permit a second boat to be diverted to this trade, and the Treasury, in proffering this request, desired to have the support of the Eastern Committee.

The Committee approved that, when the Treasury approached the Admiralty on the subject, their letter should state that the Eastern Committee attached importance to the diversion of a second ship to this trade route.

Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

3. The Committee resumed the discussion of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916, adjourned from the previous meeting (E.C., 20th Meeting, Minute 2), and had before them the memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes (E.C.–825) (Appendix).

The Chairman said that at their 18th Meeting (Minute 3) it had been stated that the War Cabinet had decided that when a civil administration was set up in Palestine, M. Picot should be associated with us in it. He had said at the meeting that he had no recollection of any such decision, and, after consulting the records, all that he had been able to trace in this connection was that at an Anglo-French Conference in December 1916 (I.C.–13) the British Government had agreed that when the British entered Palestine, a French Moslem detachment should be associated in the operations, and a French political officer should be attached to the British Commander-in-chief. So far, therefore, as Palestine was concerned, there had been no pledge of French participation in the civil administration.

Turning to Sir Mark Sykes' memorandum, the Chairman said that the gist of it was contained in the following passage, to the

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terms of the first part of which he did not think the Committee would take exception :—

"In order to keep the Allies together, we must conciliate the Italians. I suggest this were best done by agreeing to appoint an Italian Adviser on Italian interests in Palestine, and a French Adviser on French interests in Palestine, to the General Officer Commanding E.E.F. M. Picot is prepared to support this idea. If it be accepted, there is a complete end to inequality, and the Advisers' duties can be defined. The Italians will not, I think, be difficult in matters of definition and limitation so long as it is clear that there is no difference in status between the two Advisers. We must also conciliate the French. This we can do by coming to an understanding as to the position of the French High Commissioner in Syria, in the event of our occupying any part of Syria. I am aware that this is difficult, and military objections would be raised, but the matter is one of importance, and I regard it essential to disabuse the French of any idea of our having any ulterior motives in Syria. I regard this suspicion on the part of the French as dangerous to the *Entente* as a whole, and any arrangements we may make in regard to Palestine must be such as to lead to its removal."

As regards the position in Syria, the Chairman said it was important to know whether the question that had been raised by Sir Mark Sykes was due to the importunities of M. Picot or to pressure from the French Government.

Sir Mark Sykes said that there was no doubt that the French Government attached great importance to this question, and he thought it very necessary to give the French an assurance that if, and when, we get into Syria they will be accorded special privileges. To this, he believed, the Italians would raise no objection, so long as they were permitted to have on General Allenby's Staff a representative of their own of equal status to M. Picot. The French quite recognised that any administration that might be set up in Syria must be subject to military considerations; but they wanted from us a definite guarantee that we will not treat Syria as we have treated Palestine and take over its government ourselves. If we did not give way on this point he apprehended serious trouble. As regards the Syrians themselves, they admired French culture, but they certainly did not desire French annexation. The Agreement of 1916 was dead, although the French refused to admit it. What was required now was some modification of, or substitute for, that Agreement, and he had prepared the paper, now before the Committee, with the view of suggesting the lines on which the new instrument should be drawn up. M. Picot himself was strongly pro-*Entente*, so much so that he had been accused of selling Palestine to the English. He suggested that M. Picot should remain with General Allenby to advise as to French interests in Syria, and that another Frenchman, and also an Italian officer, should be attached to the General Staff, to advise as to the interests of their respective nations in Palestine.

General Macdonogh was quite certain that General Allenby would strongly object to having a French High Commissioner administering Syria when he got there, although he might be prepared to agree to having an Italian as well as a French Adviser on his Staff in Palestine. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was founded on a pre-war basis without due consideration to a changing military situation. It would be impossible to have two administrations in time of war in adjoining territories, in which our troops were operating; that is to say, a British administration in Palestine, and a French administration in Syria, especially as the latter territory would be nearest our advanced troops. No General would like to have foreign administrative officers in charge of "back areas." The position in Greece was not analogous, because there we were working

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through a native Government which was friendly to us. Syria was under Turkish administration, and we could not certainly work through this. All that we could do, he thought, when we got to Syria was to let M. Picot advise as to French interests there just as he did in Palestine. He suggested that a telegram should be sent to General Allenby saying that His Majesty's Government intend, when we enter Syria, that the French shall be accorded certain special privileges, and that General Allenby should be asked to submit his views on the subject.

Mr. Balfour said that the Marquis Imperiali had been to see him a few days ago, and that he had told the Italian Ambassador that, so far as Palestine was concerned, His Majesty's Government recognised their obligation to grant equal consideration to the French and the Italians. The Government of Palestine was eventually to be internationalised, and therefore we could not give to the French privileges we did not accord to the Italians. Syria, however, was quite a different proposition. He fully appreciated the military point of view, and it would certainly be necessary to explain to the French that, when we entered Syria, military considerations must outweigh all others. If the French declined to accept this situation, there would remain the alternative of issuing instructions to General Allenby not to enter Syria at all, and this contingency might quietly be pointed out to the French. In reply to a question, Mr. Balfour said that M. Cambon had been too tactful so far to approach him definitely on this subject, but there was no doubt that he, too, recognised the possibility of friction. If the Committee wished, he would take an early opportunity of finding out from M. Cambon whether the French Government felt very strongly about the agreement, and what their expectations were when we entered Syria. Before he did this, however, it would be useful for him to know what General Allenby's views were.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the Italians as well as the French should have an Adviser on General Allenby's staff; and that, as regards Syria, they should be told that when we got there they would be shown every consideration. As regards the agreement, he had asked M. Margerie and other Frenchmen whether they were not prepared to drop it. He found, however, that, while nobody believed it could ever be carried out, there was strong opposition to its abrogation.

Mr. Montagu thought that perhaps too much importance was attached to the actual title which the French Adviser or Commissioner would hold when we entered Syria. It did not really matter how he was labelled, so long as he was subject to the orders of our General. We must insist that, whatever administration may be set up, he must be subject to the supreme jurisdiction of General Allenby, so long as he was there.

General Smuts foresaw possibilities of friction in the future, and these might be accentuated by the fact that M. Picot was not unpopular (so General Allenby had given him to understand) among the Arabs.

Sir Mark Sykes expressed dissent.

Lord Hardinge was opposed at the present time to our permitting the French to have two officers, one to be Adviser for Palestine and another for Syria. He thought, however, that the Italians should certainly have a representative on General Allenby's staff.

The Chairman and the members of the Committee concurred in this objection.

The Committee decided that—

(i.) *The Italians were entitled to have, on the Staff of the General Officer Commanding in Palestine, a representative of their own with a status equivalent to that of M. Picot in relation to Palestine, but that the French could not be allowed to have two representatives there.*

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(ii.) *A telegram should be sent to General Allenby asking his opinion as to the steps that would require to be taken to meet French views in the event of his forces advancing into Syria.*

(iii.) *The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be asked to sound M. Cambon tentatively on the subject of Syria on receipt of General Allenby's reply.*

Declaration to the King of the Hejaz.

4. The Committee proceeded to discuss Annex (C) to Sir Mark Sykes's memorandum (E.C.–825), "Declaration to the King of the Hejaz."

The Chairman renewed his objection, which had been stated at the previous meeting, to the inclusion in paragraph 5 of the proposed declaration of the words about annexation. No such disclaimer has appeared in any of the previous declarations of policy or assurances. On the contrary, we had, from the start, made a reservation as to Basrah which it might be an absolute necessity to incorporate in British territory at the close of the war; and it was quite gratuitous to volunteer pledges now for which no one had asked, and which might be a source of grave inconvenience in the future.

It was decided—

To delete these words, the Committee being of opinion that the succeeding phrase about consulting the wishes of the people in disposing of the occupied territories were sufficient for the purpose.

The Committee then proceeded to discuss the general case for the issue of a new declaration.

Sir Mark Sykes said that it was most important to get the French on the right lines as regards Syria before our troops entered Syrian territory. The French were resolutely opposed to the cancellation of the agreement of 1916, obsolete as that agreement had been shown to be. If we could induce the French to associate themselves with us in some such declaration as that before the Committee, our Allies would be definitely committed to what virtually amounted to an abrogation of the agreement.

General Smuts thought that confusion was bound to be caused by the varying formulæ adopted in several paragraphs of the draft declaration, and that they would give rise to suspicion and doubt, especially in an oriental mind.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he agreed with General Smuts, and suggested that the first four paragraphs of the declaration might be eliminated.

Mr. Montagu raised the question whether it was desirable, as proposed in the preamble, to associate ourselves in any way with the French in a declaration that embraced Mesopotamia with which the French had nothing to do.

The Chairman, in reply, suggested that the declaration, when amended by the Committee, might be made on behalf of His Majesty's Government alone in the first instance, and that the French might afterwards associate themselves with it. He reminded the Committee that in January, 1918, Sir R. Wingate had recommended, in view of the "growing uneasiness among Arabs about the *Entente's* intentions for Arab countries," that he should be authorised to give King Hussein the following definite assurances:—

1. That His Majesty's Government is still determined to secure Arab independence, and to fulfil the promises made at the beginning of the Hejaz revolt.
2. That His Majesty's Government will countenance no permanent foreign or European occupation of Palestine, Irak (except the province of Basrah), or Syria after the war.
3. That these districts will be in the possession of their natives, and that foreign interference with Arab countries will be restricted to assistance and protection.

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For various reasons this had not been done, but the Chairman thought that substantially Sir R. Wingate's recommendations on that occasion embodied what the Committee now desired.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that he was strongly opposed to giving further pledges, either to King Hussein or to anybody else, respecting the future status of Mesopotamia. He reminded the Committee of the pledges given by Sir H. McMahon in 1915, which had proved a source of embarrassment ever since, and drew attention to the fact that Sir P. Cox had protested against making Mesopotamia a pawn in our negotiations with King Hussein, both in January 1918, and again in his memorandum to the Committee of the 22nd April of the same year. The language which it was now proposed to hold to the King might not go beyond what had already been said, but he considered a further formal undertaking, which the French Government were to be asked to countersign, quite unnecessary. By bringing in the French Government an entirely new element of complication was introduced. If Great Britain and France jointly undertook—as was proposed—that the future administration of Mesopotamia should be based on the "principle of the consent of the governed," France might claim, with some show of reason, that she was entitled to see that the undertaking was duly fulfilled. To that extent we should be giving her an opening for interference in Mesopotamian affairs.

After further discussion, it was decided—

To drop altogether the first four paragraphs of the draft declaration, leaving the remaining paragraphs to run as follows:—

"The Governments of Great Britain and France desire to make it clear to the Government of the Hejaz, and Arabic-speaking peoples of Arabia, Syria, Jazirah, and Irak, that on the part of neither Government has there ever been any intention of disposing of these areas, or of allowing them to be disposed of by any other party, in any way other than as desired by the populations thereof.

"2. The two Governments further wish to make it clear that they desire to facilitate to the utmost co-operation, alliance, and unity of purpose among the various elements of the Arabic-speaking peoples in the regions mentioned in the last paragraph with a view to the ultimate restoration of the liberty and prosperity which these areas formerly enjoyed."

Mr. Montagu thought that the first paragraph of the amended declaration would still give the French Government, if they chose to avail themselves of it, an opening for interference in the affairs of Mesopotamia. But to this it was replied that no real ground for such apprehension existed in the terms of the amended paragraph, and that any such interference, if it were attempted by the French, would have to be met by the sharp rejoinder that it was no business of theirs.

The Committee accordingly decided—

To adopt the form of the Declaration as amended.

Suggested Exchange of Views by the British and French Governments in Regard to their Policy Towards the Arabs.

5. The discussion of Annexes (A) and (B) to Sir Mark Sykes's Paper was postponed, at his request, to a future meeting.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
July 18, 1918.

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APPENDIX.

(E.C.–825.)

Memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes.

WITH regard to the memoranda already circulated, I think it would perhaps be useful if I made a brief recapitulation of the whole *Entente*-Arab situation. I venture, therefore, to analyse the various factors as follows :—

The King of Hejaz is influenced by two considerations :

1. His ambition to be titular chief of the whole of the Arabic-speaking peoples.
2. His fear lest he be unwittingly contributing to the handing over of Arab countries to European Powers, thus exposing himself to the public charge of treachery and the private stings of his own conscience.

With regard to the first of these considerations, I feel we have no concern ; with regard to the second, I feel we owe him not only sympathy, but that we ought to do everything we can to help him.

As the King of Hejaz is an Arab and a strict Moslem, to him the idea of helping European Powers to annex what is either Islamic or Arab country must naturally be repugnant. I have no doubt that he is surrounded by advisers, some, doubtless, in Turkish pay, who impress upon him, firstly, that the French wish to Frenchify Syria, and that the British intend to Indianise* Mesopotamia, while the more fanatical elements will insist that the French will destroy all religion on Syria, and the Indians introduce idolatry into Mesopotamia. It is not difficult to imagine what torments this kind of taunt obliges a man like the King of Hejaz to endure. That we should do our best to relieve him of such fears seems to me both politic and right.

The Syrian Attitude.

The Syrian situation is complicated by the following divergencies of opinion among Syrians :—

(i.) The Maronites desire independence of a greater Lebanon, because the existing Lebanon is overcrowded, but on the other hand a greater Lebanon would leave the Maronites in a narrow minority.

(ii.) The non-Moslem Syrians, outside the Lebanon, viz., Christians, Jews, and Metawilis, are somewhat apprehensive of an independent Syria because they fear they would be subjected to the Moslems.

(iii.) The Moslems desire Syrian independence, but are averse to being subjected, no matter how indirectly, to the King of Hejaz, whom they regard as living in unprogressive surroundings.

(iv.) The Christians are to a great degree pro-French, the Moslems mildly pro-British, and decidedly anti-French.

(v.) The Druses are strongly anti-French.

(vi.) It is, however, almost certain that the vast mass of the people desire very strongly to be free of Ottoman rule, and to be wholly divorced from the Turkish Empire.

(vii.) These divergencies of opinion are reflected wherever Syrians are to be found. In France, where there is a small colony of about 800 to 1,000 who are influential in politics; in Manchester, where there are about 300—a wealthy mercantile community ; in the United States, where there are about 80,000, mostly in Chicago, New York, and Boston—nearly all well-to-do. In the Southern American States, viz., Argentine, Chili, and Brazil, perhaps over 100,000.

The main point and the only point on which these parties are agreed is a desire to be rid of the Turks, and a desire not to be annexed to a European State.

* Note.—By this is meant that the Turkish propagandists would play on the King's racial and religious feelings at one and the same time by impressing on him that we intend to de-Arabise the culture of Mesopotamia by pivoting it on Bombay, and to de-Islamise it by introducing Hinduism.

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If the French came out with a liberal declaration of policy, there is no doubt in my mind that a good deal more cohesion would be possible.

There are large political assets in America, North and South, which would be at the disposal of the *Entente* cause if only the French would take a reasonable line. Further, I am fairly sure that, provided the military situation in Palestine warranted it, the Syrians of all kinds would welcome an Anglo-French invasion and give actual assistance, provided it was clear that it did not mean—

(i.) Imposing Hejaz rule on Syria.
(ii.) Imposing a foreign flag on Syria.
(iii.) Bartering Syria to the Turks at a Peace Conference in return for a British occupation of Mesopotamia and French commercial monopoly in Syria.

Mesopotamian Situation.

With regard to Mesopotamia, it is not necessary to say much, the different factors being already familiar to the Committee. They are:—

(i.) The low state of civilisation of the riparian tribes.
(ii.) The isolated nature, by reason of religion and tradition, of Kerbela and Nedjef.
(iii.) The great difference between Baghdad and Basra.

Anglo-French Relations.

The danger point in this matter lies in the following:—

(i.) A number of influential French Colonial and Clerical politicians have still very impossible ideas about expansion and annexation in Syria.
(ii.) There is a strong dormant sentiment in regard to the Holy Land among the French people, which is symbolised by the protectorate of Christians.
(iii.) The elements interested in Syria and Palestine were reared on the traditional anti-English sentiments which are connected with Madagascar, Tunis, and Fashoda. These sentiments are dormant, but by inexpert handling may be roused to life again.
(iv.) There is a tendency to feel that Great Britain has not quite played up to France in the matter of the Agreement. M. Picot went out under the impression that he was to participate in Palestinian administration. There is much confusion on this, as Annex (A) will show. Anyway, M. Picot found himself in an impossible position and did his best to maintain his dignity without provoking a real rupture. The French feel that we have made good politically in Palestine by setting up an all-British administration. They now fear we may extend this all-British provisional administration in Syria if the fortune of war carried us there.

Italian Position.

In considering the Italian attitude we have to take into account the following facts:—

(*a.*) Italian influential opinion has no ideas about the modern outlook at all. They only think of annexations, strategic frontiers, &c.
(*b.*) They stick to the idea of equal shares, irrespective of effort, expenditure, participation, or previous events.
(*c.*) They are fully aware that the Anglo-French Agreement gives them a castle in Spain, that no one can put them in possession, that they could not take it, that they could not hold it if they took it.
(*d.*) They are bitterly jealous of the French and cannot bear the idea of anything being done without their assent.

Having analysed as above, I venture to define our objectives. Our main post-war objective I take to be that a stable and progressive state of affairs shall reign in the non-Turkish regions of the Ottoman Empire, subject to the following conditions:—

1. That this state of affairs shall be established on a basis compatible with our economic and political security in the Middle East.

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2. That the populations of these areas shall have full opportunity of developing into independent civilised peoples.

Our war policy is on the above hypothesis to use all political and military assets available in that area to achieve that objective.

To do that we must—

1. Keep the Allies together.
2. Develop the Arab movement on sane lines.
3. Concentrate on hitting the enemy militarily and politically whenever circumstances permit.

1. In order to keep the Allies together, we must conciliate the Italians. I suggest this were best done by agreeing to appoint an Italian adviser on Italian interests in Palestine and a French adviser on French interests in Palestine to the G.O.C., E.E.F. M. Picot is prepared to support this idea. If it be accepted, there is a complete end to inequality, and the advisers' duties can be defined. The Italians will not, I think, be difficult in matters of definition and limitation so long as it is clear that there is no difference in status between the two advisers. We must also conciliate the French. This we can do by coming to an understanding as to the position of the French High Commissioner in Syria in the event of our occupying any part of Syria. I am aware that this is difficult, and military objections will be raised, but the matter is one of importance, and I regard it as essential to disabuse the French of any idea of our having ulterior motives in Syria. I regard this suspicion on the part of the French as dangerous to the *Entente* as a whole, and any arrangement we may make in regard to Palestine must be such as to lead to its removal.

2. In order to develop the Arab movement properly, I submit that the following steps should be taken:—

(*a.*) That we and the French should submit the suggested joint declaration to the King of Hejaz (Annex (C)), and get the main lines published and known to all Arab-speaking peoples we can get into touch with.

It may be that there is an objection to the no-annexation clause, but if we are to counter the Turk propaganda we must be clear on this point; we may reserve the right to make ourselves temporarily responsible for order and defence in certain areas, and, if it is thought fit, we could introduce words to that effect, but we must make it clear that we do not intend to seize and make part of our Empires any portion of the Arabic-speaking world.

(*b.*) This done, we could then start—

(i.) A general propaganda among the various Syrian countries in Egypt and America, both north and south;
(ii.) Promote conferences amongst the various Arab chiefs of the peninsula;
(iii.) Make our Mesopotamian policy plain to the public by the press accounts of the measures we are taking;
(iv.) Propagandise the Arabic-speaking peoples as a whole with the one idea of getting rid of the Turk;
(v.) Give the King of Hejaz all the moral support we could as premier Arab and initiator of the Arab movement, but carefully abstaining from forwarding his claim to actual kingship over Arabs who do not desire his rule.
(vi.) Reorganise and re-staff the Arab Bureau and make it perform its functions properly, which is the co-ordination of the whole of the Arab movement.

With regard to the last point, I need not say anything on the military side; on the political side I submit that we ought to get America on the side of the Arabs, as a people needing liberation. This, however, we cannot do until the President understands that by going to war with Turkey he is not entering into a tangle of Old-World arrangements. It is for this reason that I strongly advocate an exchange of views in the sense of Annex (B), which would clear us of all possible charges of Imperialism.

(Signed) MARK SYKES.

Foreign Office, July 6, 1918.

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Annex (A).

Memorandum on M. Picot's Position in Palestine.

In the course of my discussions with M. Picot, he referred, as I expected he would, to the position he had held in Palestine. He told me he had had a very bad time indeed: his Government expected that he would have a share in the administration, which indeed was promised in the War Cabinet decision of January 1917, and though his Paris chiefs would not move in the matter, they blamed him for not managing to get what they would not press London to give him. However, he was good-humoured about it, but pointed out that his position ought to be made clear before he returns.

In this I agree, and I submit that it would be a proper and graceful act on our part if we were to inform the French that in all matters concerning political relations between the E.E.F. and inhabitants of the areas of special interest to France that we should use the French mission as our medium and that the C.I.C., Egypt Force, would regard the French Commissioner as his political adviser on military-political questions which directly concern these regions.

I am further of opinion that we should assure the French Government that, in event of our occupying any part of these areas of special interest to France, we should rely on the French mission to organise and control (with due regard to military decision) any temporary administration which it might be necessary to set up.

This administration, it should be made plain, would be subject to the C.I.C., but the personnel should be French. At present I think M. Picot has to combat the idea that we intend to take advantage of the military situation to set up a British civil administration in Syria if we get there and call it a military administration.

From an *Entente* point of view, this is an idea which should be dispelled, particularly as there is no immediate prospect of the case arising.

We are not laying any fresh difficulties in the path of the military, but anticipating what might, if left to drift, prove a cause of unnecessary friction.

Annex (B).

1. In the opinion of the Governments of Great Britain and France there can be no prospect of a permanent and lasting peace in the Middle East so long as non-Ottoman nationalities, now subject to Ottoman rule, or inhabiting areas hitherto subject to Ottoman rule now occupied by the Allied forces, have no adequate guarantee of social, material, and political security.
2. That the only guarantee of permanent improvement is to be found in the securing of self-government to the inhabitants of such areas.
3. That in view of the condition of these areas arising from misgovernment, devastation, and massacre, it is the opinion of the two Powers that a period of tutelage must supervene before the inhabitants of these areas are capable of complete self-government and in a position to maintain their independence.
4. That the Powers exercising such tutelage should exercise it on the sanction of the free nations of the world, and with the consent of the inhabitants of the areas concerned.

Annex (C).

Declaration to the King of Hedjaz.

The Governments of Great Britain and France desire jointly to inform the Government of Hejaz that their policy in regard to the Arabic-speaking peoples of Arabia, Syria, Jazirah, and Irak is as follows:—

1. In such areas as were free before the war the Governments recognise and reaffirm the existing freedom and independence of the inhabitants.
2. In such areas as have been liberated since the war by the efforts of the inhabitants, the two Governments recognise the complete and sovereign independence of the inhabitants of those regions.

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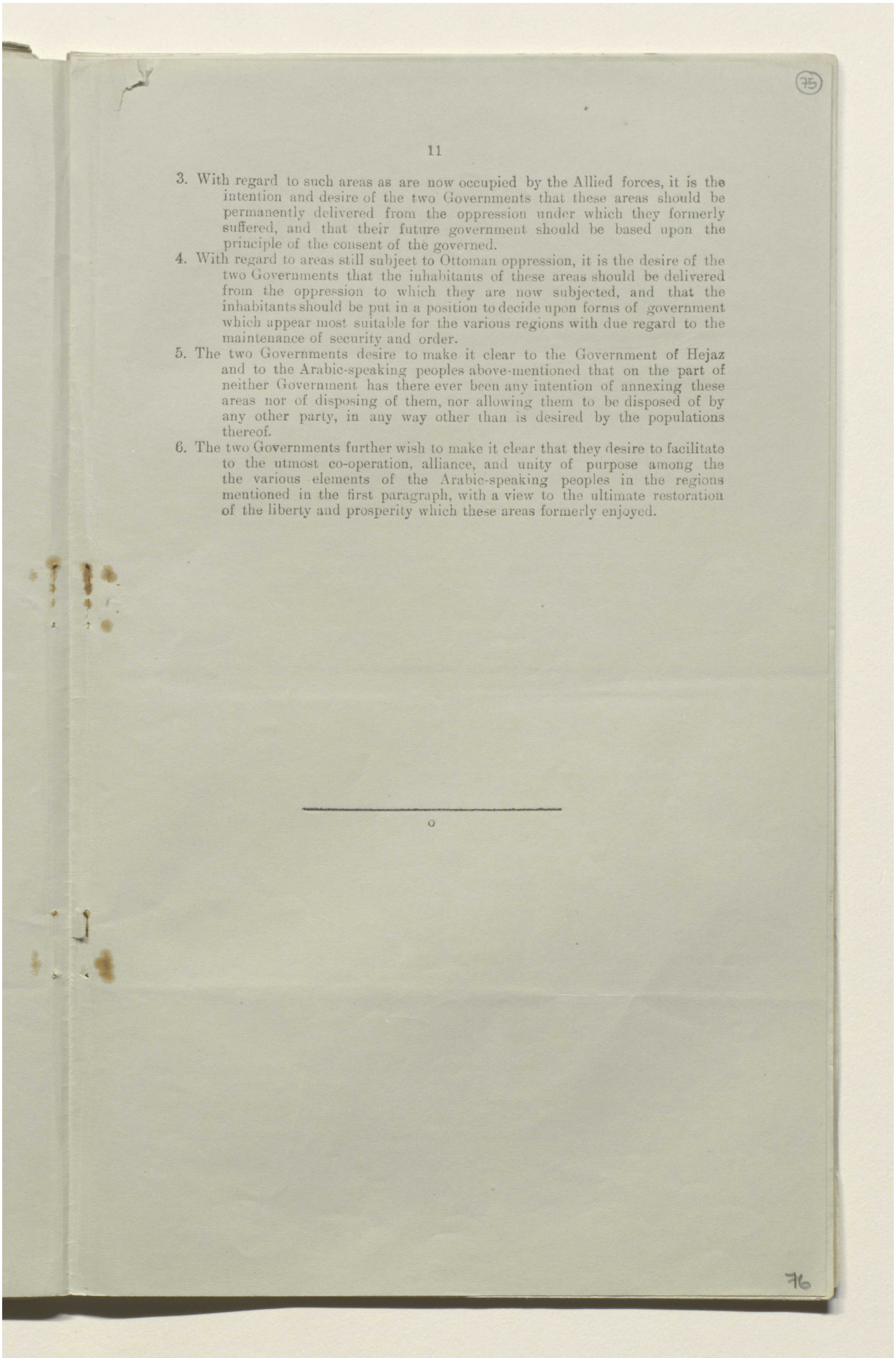

3. With regard to such areas as are now occupied by the Allied forces, it is the intention and desire of the two Governments that these areas should be permanently delivered from the oppression under which they formerly suffered, and that their future government should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed.
4. With regard to areas still subject to Ottoman oppression, it is the desire of the two Governments that the inhabitants of these areas should be delivered from the oppression to which they are now subjected, and that the inhabitants should be put in a position to decide upon forms of government which appear most suitable for the various regions with due regard to the maintenance of security and order.
5. The two Governments desire to make it clear to the Government of Hejaz and to the Arabic-speaking peoples above-mentioned that on the part of neither Government has there ever been any intention of annexing these areas nor of disposing of them, nor allowing them to be disposed of by any other party, in any way other than is desired by the populations thereof.
6. The two Governments further wish to make it clear that they desire to facilitate to the utmost co-operation, alliance, and unity of purpose among the the various elements of the Arabic-speaking peoples in the regions mentioned in the first paragraph, with a view to the ultimate restoration of the liberty and prosperity which these areas formerly enjoyed.

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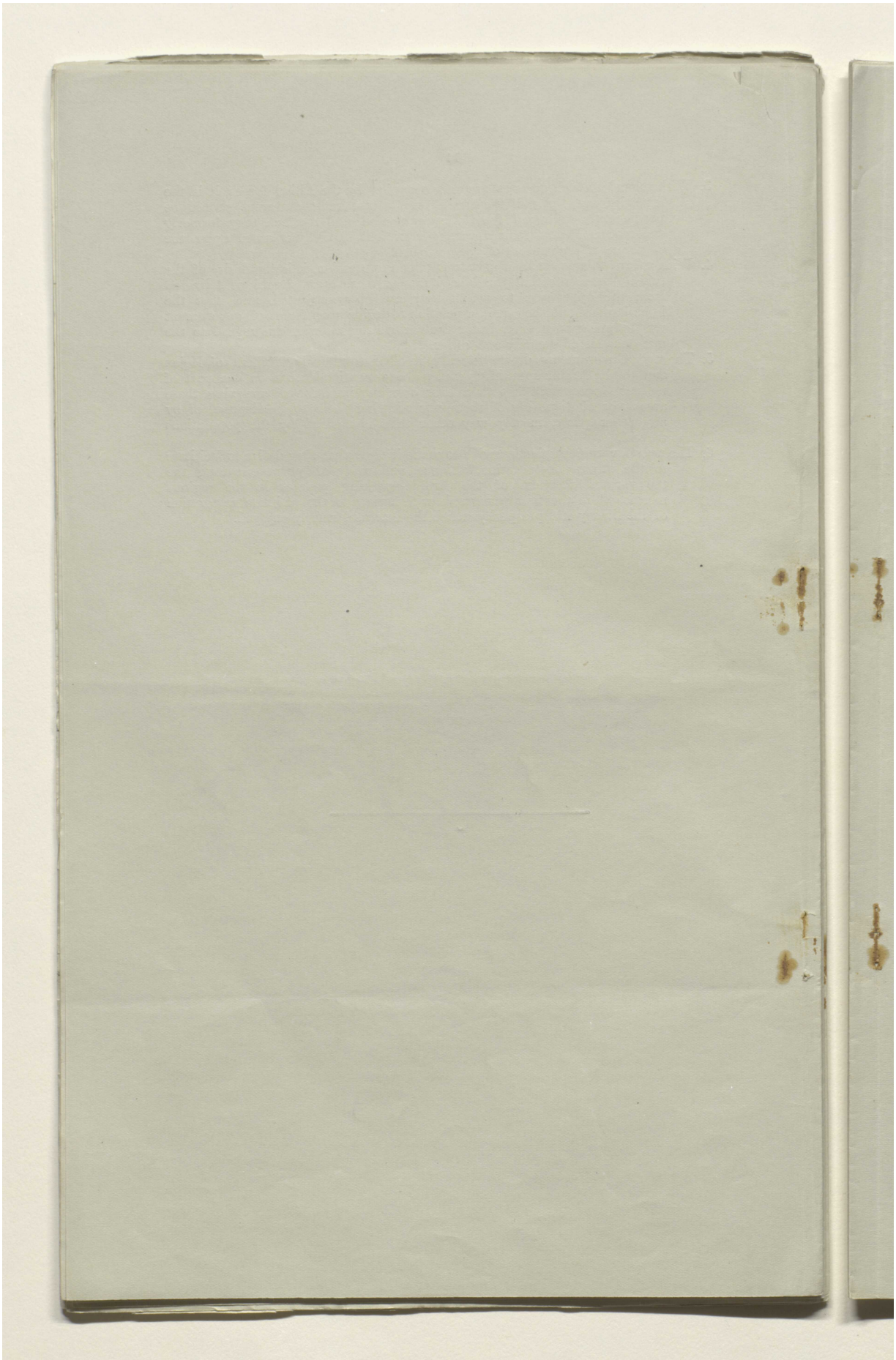

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Lord Curzon. (76)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. August 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 22nd Minutes. 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, July 29, 1918, *at* 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (representing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Anglo-French Agreement of 1916: French Adviser in Syria.

1. THE Chairman said that at their 21st Meeting (Minute 3) the Committee had decided that a telegram should be sent to General Allenby asking his opinion as to the steps that would require to be taken to meet French views in the event of his forces advancing into Syria; and that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be asked to sound M. Cambon tentatively, on the subject of Syria, on receipt of General Allenby's reply. That reply had now been received, and was as follows (E.C.–953):—

> "The civil administration of any occupied territory must be included in military administration, as is that of Palestine now, during the period of active military operations. In event of my troops occupying part of Syrian areas which are regarded as of special interest to France, I shall be ready to accept, subject to my supreme authority, French advice and assistance in regard to purely administrative affairs so long as they do not conflict with military requirements. I should be glad if you could inform me what are areas in Syria which are regarded as of special interest to France. Are they those defined in Sykes-Picot Agreement?"

This telegram, the Chairman thought, showed that General Allenby was prepared to accept the Committee's suggestion in quite the right spirit.

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Lord Hardinge said that the Syrian areas which were regarded as being of special interest to France were those comprehended in the general designation "Area A" in the Anglo-French (commonly known as the Sykes-Picot) Agreement.

The Committee decided—

To ask the War Office to reply to General Allenby in the above sense.

Italian Adviser in Palestine.

2. Lord Robert Cecil reminded the Committee that they had, at the same meeting, decided that the Italians were entitled to have, on the staff of the General Officer Commanding in Palestine, a representative of their own, with status equivalent to that of M. Picot in relation to Palestine, but that the French could not be allowed to have two representatives there. The Committee had before them a group of four telegrams (E.C.–910) (Appendix I), which had passed between the War Office and the G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt, which showed that things were not progressing very satisfactorily, and he suggested that the case could not be left where it stood at present. The Italians were pressing the matter, and they had quite as important interests in Palestine as the French had in Syria.

General Wilson expressed the opinion that General Allenby did not properly understand the position or what was actually proposed. He thought that if matters were clearly explained to him he would probably raise no further difficulty.

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should prepare a telegram, clearly explaining the situation, for the War Office to send to the G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt.

Baku and the Caucasus.

The Chairman said that it was difficult to make out exactly what the present position at Baku and in the Caucasus was, but the general tone of recent telegrams received from that area had been despondent.

General Macdonogh said that just before the meeting the following telegram had been received from Bagdad, No. X 666, 29th July (E.C.–967):—

> "Following extract from Clutterbuck's report, dated Baku, 26th July, is wired by Dunsterville:—
>
> "'There was a *coup d'état* last night. Bolsheviks were thrown out, and new Government, which begs our assistance, set up. Bicherakov states that he will hold line till help comes. Baku requests that staff officers, instructors, and troops be sent there, and that first instalment should come immediately, even if small. Transports already despatched to Enzeli, and fleet is on our side. Dunsterville is sending to Baku at once a party of officers and N.C.O.'s, and shortly he himself will follow.'"

In reply to questions, General Macdonogh said that one battalion might get away from Enzeli *en route* for Baku about the 7th, or possibly the 5th August, and that the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, had wired the previous day that two naval nucleus crews, each with one naval 12-pdr., had left Bagdad on the 27th instant, followed next day by Commodore Norris.

Mr. Montagu said that the message read out by the Director of Military Intelligence was the more satisfactory as the most recent

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telegram (E.C.-954) which had been circulated to the Committee on the situation at Baku had contained Mr. McDonnell's report, which stated, among other things, that everything depended upon the attitude of the fleet; although at a general meeting of all hands the fleet voted against British help, nevertheless the real force, consisting of the two gunboats and one light auxiliary cruiser, were willing to assist the landing of British force a week ago; unfortunately no British force was then available, and it was now more than probable that, owing to the open hostility of these three ships to the Bolshevik Government on the subject of British aid, an attempt to change the crews would be made, and Bolshevik sailors had arrived from Russia for this purpose. The latest news from Baku received by Mr. MacDonnell reported no change in the attitude of these ships, which still remain friendly. Mr. Montagu said that he did not understand why steps could not be taken either to destroy or to remove these ships while the crews remain friendly, and before they were replaced.

General Macdonogh, in reply to a question, explained, with the aid of a map, the present distribution of our troops between Hamadan and Baku. The telegram he had read out had stated that General Dunsterville was sending officers and N.C.O.'s to Baku itself, where we had four armoured cars. At Enzeli we had three platoons, one gun, and two aeroplanes. At Resht we had two British officers and 110 Indian infantry. Here, it appeared, the British Consulate had been burnt, but the Jangalis had since evacuated the town, and matters seem to have quieted down again. At Kasvin we had one squadron of the 14th Hussars, two mountain guns, two and a quarter companies of infantry in Ford cars, half a company of the Hampshires, an aeroplane, seven light armoured cars, a battery of field artillery, and also a section of an ammunition column. At Hamadan there were two squadrons of cavalry, half a company of the Hampshires, a company of infantry in Ford cars, and the 1st echelon of the 39th Infantry Brigade. Altogether along the line we had about 4,000 fighting men.

The Chairman thought that this was sufficient answer to Sir C. Marling's constant complaints about the inadequacy of military support.

The Committee agreed that the news was rather more reassuring and the position more generally promising than they had been for some time.

General Dunsterville.

The Chairman said that, after the last meeting, the War Office sent a telegram to the G.O.C. Mesopotamia (E.C. 898), expressing dissatisfaction with General Dunsterville's failure, in spite of the large staff and adequate forces at his disposal, either to secure Enzeli or to send any really useful information, and suggesting his recall. The Chairman thought that the telegram should have been submitted in advance either to the Committee or to its Chairman. Meanwhile, General Dunsterville's explanation of the difficulties with which he was confronted had been received (E.C. 870). The Commander-in-Chief in India had telegraphed (E.C. 921) that he was disposed to think that, in view of Dunsterville's want of success, a change would be advisable. General Marshall, on the other hand, had replied as follows (E.C. 951):—

> "I deprecate Dunsterville's replacement at present. In my opinion he is only just now in a position to act on his instructions. He is a man of character, and it would be difficult to replace him."

The Chairman said that he thought that the Committee would accept General Marshall's opinion. There was no doubt that the difficulties of obtaining accurate and useful information had been

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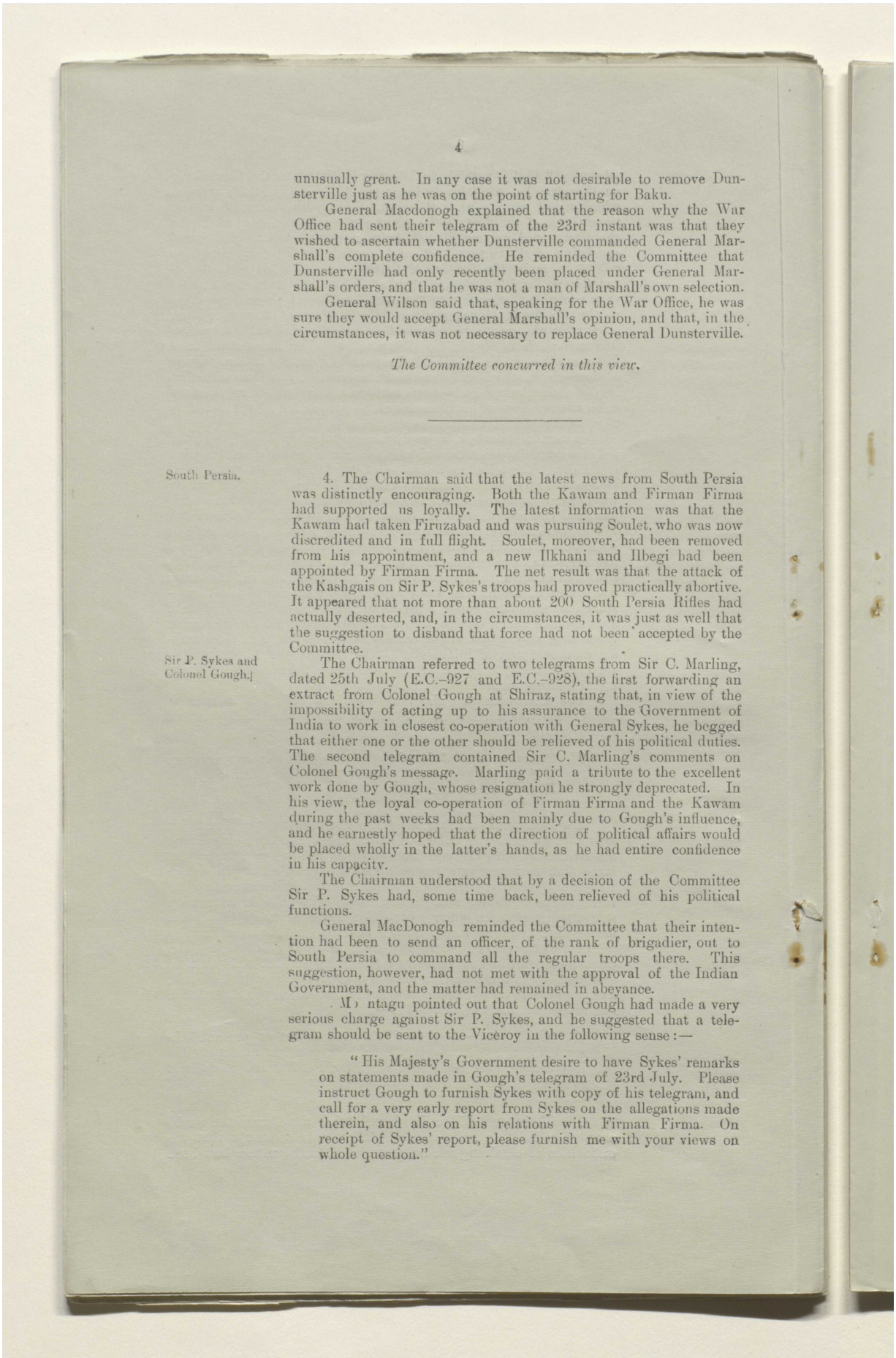

unusually great. In any case it was not desirable to remove Dunsterville just as he was on the point of starting for Baku.

General Macdonogh explained that the reason why the War Office had sent their telegram of the 23rd instant was that they wished to ascertain whether Dunsterville commanded General Marshall's complete confidence. He reminded the Committee that Dunsterville had only recently been placed under General Marshall's orders, and that he was not a man of Marshall's own selection.

General Wilson said that, speaking for the War Office, he was sure they would accept General Marshall's opinion, and that, in the circumstances, it was not necessary to replace General Dunsterville.

The Committee concurred in this view.

South Persia.

4. The Chairman said that the latest news from South Persia was distinctly encouraging. Both the Kawam and Firman Firma had supported us loyally. The latest information was that the Kawam had taken Firuzabad and was pursuing Soulet, who was now discredited and in full flight. Soulet, moreover, had been removed from his appointment, and a new Ilkhani and Ilbegi had been appointed by Firman Firma. The net result was that the attack of the Kashgais on Sir P. Sykes's troops had proved practically abortive. It appeared that not more than about 200 South Persia Rifles had actually deserted, and, in the circumstances, it was just as well that the suggestion to disband that force had not been accepted by the Committee.

Sir P. Sykes and Colonel Gough.

The Chairman referred to two telegrams from Sir C. Marling, dated 25th July (E.C.–927 and E.C.–928), the first forwarding an extract from Colonel Gough at Shiraz, stating that, in view of the impossibility of acting up to his assurance to the Government of India to work in closest co-operation with General Sykes, he begged that either one or the other should be relieved of his political duties. The second telegram contained Sir C. Marling's comments on Colonel Gough's message. Marling paid a tribute to the excellent work done by Gough, whose resignation he strongly deprecated. In his view, the loyal co-operation of Firman Firma and the Kawam during the past weeks had been mainly due to Gough's influence, and he earnestly hoped that the direction of political affairs would be placed wholly in the latter's hands, as he had entire confidence in his capacity.

The Chairman understood that by a decision of the Committee Sir P. Sykes had, some time back, been relieved of his political functions.

General MacDonogh reminded the Committee that their intention had been to send an officer, of the rank of brigadier, out to South Persia to command all the regular troops there. This suggestion, however, had not met with the approval of the Indian Government, and the matter had remained in abeyance.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that Colonel Gough had made a very serious charge against Sir P. Sykes, and he suggested that a telegram should be sent to the Viceroy in the following sense:—

> "His Majesty's Government desire to have Sykes' remarks on statements made in Gough's telegram of 23rd July. Please instruct Gough to furnish Sykes with copy of his telegram, and call for a very early report from Sykes on the allegations made therein, and also on his relations with Firman Firma. On receipt of Sykes' report, please furnish me with your views on whole question."

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The Chairman said that Sir C. Marling's telegram so far had been seen by Colonel Gough only, and he thought the contents of both messages should be communicated to Sir P. Sykes.

The Committee concurred in the views expressed by the Secretary of State for India and the Chairman, and requested the India Office to despatch the above telegram with the addition of the words "and also of Marling's No. 645" after the words "furnish Sykes with copy of his telegram."

Arabia:
The King of the Hejaz and Ibn Saud.

5. The Committee took note of the telegram (E.C.-956) (Appendix II) which had been sent by the Foreign Office to the High Commissioner at Cairo and by the India Office to the Civil Commissioner, Bagdad, with the Chairman's approval, on the 27th instant.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*
29th July, 1918.

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APPENDIX I.

(E.C.–910.)

(Circulated with reference to E.C.–871 and E.C.–902.)

War Office to G.O.C., Egypt.

(61226 cipher M.I.) [*Despatched June* 29, 1918.]

IT is proposed by the Italian Government to send Captain Marquis Meli Lupi di Soragna to do duty with Italian detachment. He would take charge of Italian civil interests in connection with operations of a military nature and be attached to your headquarters. Jerusalem is suggested by them as place of residence. If you approve of the appointment, the proposed reply of the Foreign Office is that place of residence is a matter which must rest at your discretion.

G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt, to War Office.

(P. 267.) [*Handed in July* 1, 1918.]

Your 61226 cipher M.I., 29th June.

The Italian officer mentioned cannot be recognised as being in charge of Italian civil interests, whether connected with military operations or not, if he is sent for service with the Italian detachment. Foreign interests are safeguarded by the military administration, and no foreign officer can be recognised as having any administrative consulate or diplomatic status so long as my military administration is in force.

D.M.I. to G.O.C., Egypt.

(62535 cipher.) [*Despatched July* 19, 1918.]

Your P. 267, 1st July.

It now seems that it would meet the case if Italian officer in question were allowed to act in merely consultative and advisory capacity regarding Italian civil interests. Lord Hardinge earnestly hopes that you will sanction the appointment, which was suggested by the Foreign Office in order to circumvent insistence of Italian Government in sending Count Senni to Jerusalem.

G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt, to War Office.

(P. 371.) [*Despatched July* 22, 1918.]

Your 62535 cipher, 19th July.

The principle quoted in my telegram of 1st July, N.P. 267, must be maintained. No foreign officer can be accorded status which will permit of his acting in any capacity with regard to civil interests. Count Senni was some weeks ago given to understand that a request to visit Palestine on private affairs would be granted, but he has not made any application so far.

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APPENDIX II.

(E.C.–956.)

Mr. Balfour to High Commissioner, Cairo.

(No. 938.) *Foreign Office, July 27, 1918.*

BAGDAD telegram No. 6113 of 25th July: Khurma.

Unless you see grave objection, please communicate following message from His Majesty's Government to King Hussein :—

(R.) "His Majesty's Government notice with grave concern the increased signs of dissension between the two great leaders of the Arab peoples. His Majesty's Government believe that these events are the result of the actions of intriguers, who endeavour to set the leaders of the Arabs at variance in order to help the enemy. But they cannot tolerate dissension between their friends, and they must insist, on pain of their severe displeasure, that neither party shall take any action likely to lead to open breach. As a means of preventing occurrence so disastrous to all concerned, His Majesty's Government request that King of Hedjaz will send a conciliatory message to Ibn Saud through British telegraph suggesting amicable exchange of views with object of arriving at settlement of outstanding differences. Most important that each ruler should know mind of other. His Majesty's Government, having long experience of the integrity of both, are confident that, by rapid interchange of views, friendship and confidence will be restored." (End of R.)

Baghdad is being instructed to convey similar message to Ibn Saud. In communicating message to King, it should be impressed upon him that war with Ibn Saud would endanger all his prospects, and discredit whole Arab movement in eyes of world. He must trust to us to see that his true interests do not suffer. Attitude of wise and statesmanlike restraint can only enhance King's position and reputation throughout Arab countries.

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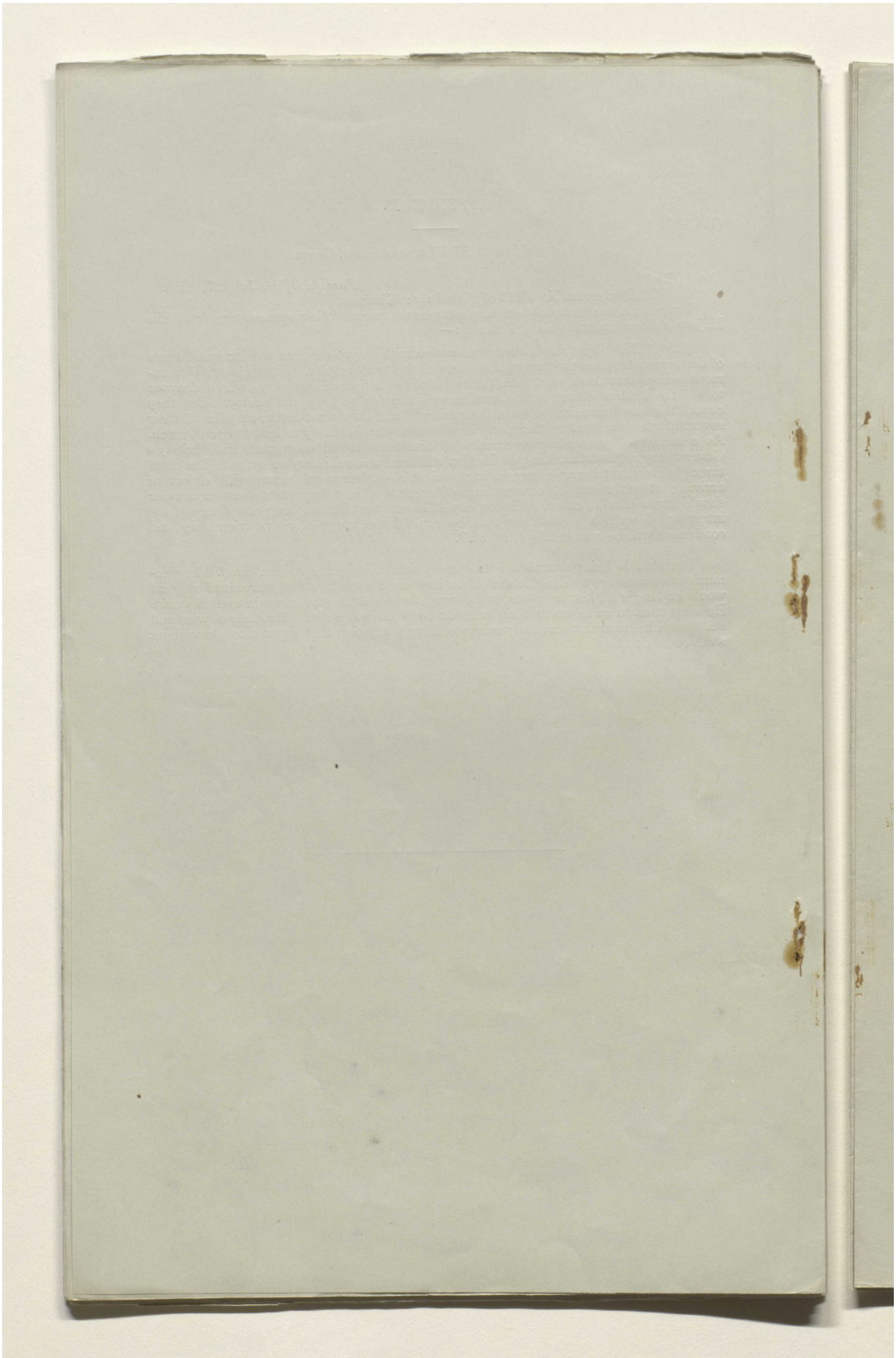

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Lord Curzon. (80)

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D. iv.

SECRET.
E.C.-1008.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

"THE WAR IN THE EAST."

(FUNCTIONS OF THE EASTERN COMMITTEE.)

Memorandum by Lord Curzon.

(Previous Papers: G.T.-3834, G.T.-3905, G.T.-3978, G.T.-4940, G.T.-5084. War Cabinet 363, Minute 20; and War Cabinet 369, Minute 11.)

The important questions raised by Mr. Montagu in his Memorandum of the 5th July (E.C.-718/G.T.-5084) have now been reviewed by the War Office Memorandum of the 15th July (E.C.-809), by the Foreign Office Memorandum of the 17th July (E.C.-978), and in notes by Lord Robert Cecil of the 20th July (E.C.-978) and Mr. Balfour of the 27th July (E.C.-978), and these papers reveal a very considerable measure of agreement on the principal points that have been raised. As Chairman of the Committee, I should like to comment upon them.

1. Mr. Montagu proposes that the Committee should be reconstituted as a Committee of Ministers only, with expert advice and assistance available in the room. That is exactly what the Committee is. If reference be made to the note of the C.I.G.S. (G.T.-3834), and the War Cabinet discussion and decision upon it (War Cabinet 369/11), it will be seen that the Members of the Committee are:—

The Chairman.
General Smuts.
The Foreign Secretary.
The Indian Secretary.
C.I.G.S.

The Foreign Secretary is accompanied by the Permanent Under-Secretary, and the Indian Secretary by his Political Secretary, the C.I.G.S. is sometimes accompanied by the D.M.I.—sometimes replaced by him. Sir M. Sykes and Mr. Oliphant attend as Foreign Office and India Office auxiliaries to the War Cabinet Secretary (Colonel Storr). As we do not vote, but decide by discussion, no technical change in the position of those who attend the Committee seems to be required. Even if carried out, it would make no difference in the way in which our work is done.

2. Mr. Montagu lays it down as an accepted premise that action is delayed by the necessity of awaiting the decision of a Committee which cannot meet often, and the War Office think that this cannot be disputed, and that the Committee is overburdened with executive work. I take leave to dispute both propositions. The members of the Committee are, perhaps, not so well aware as the Chairman must be of the conditions under which it meets. Any member of the Committee is at liberty to ask for a meeting by communicating with the Secretary (who immediately consults the Chairman) on any day. No meeting has ever been refused. On many occasions I have suggested a meeting, only to be told that the Departments concerned did not require it. Ten days recently elapsed without a meeting, because the Departments, not the Chairman, deprecated it. I am not aware of any question of importance, the decision of which has been delayed by the procedure or constitution of the Committee. Some questions—as, for instance, the discussion of the present subject—have been delayed, not by the Committee, but by the slowness of the Departments in submitting their views.

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3. Should action so prompt or immediate be required as to render even the slight delay involved in a meeting undesirable, the remedy is not only easy, but is frequently applied. On several occasions Lord Robert Cecil has sent off an urgent Foreign Office telegram—which he has kindly submitted to me as Chairman—without the delay even of an hour. The War Office has often done the same. The machinery in this respect is quite adequate for any emergency; and I think the Departments concerned may safely be trusted, in consultation with the Chairman, with the exercise of these powers. They are in accordance with the policy recommended by Lord Robert Cecil.

4. In practice the departmental devolution that is recommended in some of these papers already exists. The very fact that the Committee recently was not asked to meet for 10 days is in itself conclusive proof that departmental action was not suspended in the interim, but was going on all the while. Action is taken upon the great majority of the telegrams that come in both to Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office, without any reference to the Committee (or, I may add, to the Chairman) at all. The Departments have found no difficulty in discriminating between what I may call departmental cases and Committee cases. If there is a doubt the despatch of a telephone message or a red box can settle it in half an hour.

5. Neither does it appear to me necessary to draw a distinction between "high policy" and "executive action" in defining the functions of the Eastern Committee. The despatch of Dunsterville and an armed British force to Baku, the reinforcement of Bushire or Bunder Abbas, the despatch of emissaries to Bokhara or Tashkend, the steps to be taken with regard to the Idrisi or Ibn Saud, are all executive acts which could not possibly be dissociated from the Committee or left to other hands. If the Committee were confined to discussion of policy and were to be divorced from any control of action, I for one would not care to serve upon it any longer.

6. For similar reasons I see no reason for the constitution of a Sub-Committee, with powers either of decision or action. The proper depositories of these powers seem to me to be (*a*) the Committee, (*b*) the Departments, co-ordination between the two being maintained in the manner already described. If a Sub-Committee were set up it would constantly be confronted with the difficulty of deciding what was of primary and what was of secondary importance; time would be consumed in reporting its decisions to the main Committee; they might even be disapproved of by the latter. Recent cases in which the Eastern Committee declined to authorise action, which a Sub-Committee might, if it had existed, quite conceivably have been disposed to adopt, were the proposed despatch of a party of Dunsterville's officers and men to Bakhtiariland, Sykes' proposal to move northwards with troops and South Persia Rifles from Shiraz to Isfahan, the despatch of the Hejaz delegates to Central Asia. None of these proposals appeared at the moment to be matters either of high policy or of capital importance. The Eastern Committee, fortunately, and as events proved rightly, intervened in all these cases. Had the responsibility been delegated to others, and had a different decision been arrived at, the consequences, for which the Committee would have been held responsible, might have been far-reaching and unfortunate.

7. As a matter of fact, viewing the complexity of the problems concerned, and the fact that five departmental or governing bodies, viz., War Cabinet, Foreign Office, India Office, Government of India, War Office, with their various diplomatic, military, and political agents, are involved, out of which medley of opinion and advice a single coherent policy has to be evolved, it seems to me that the Eastern Committee, now that it has settled down to its work, does it with the minimum of friction, and on the whole very reasonably well.

8. If I were to dilate upon what in my opinion is really its weakest point, I should have to say more than I care about the position of the Chairman. Whereas his colleagues of the Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office come to the meetings well posted in all that is passing, with the resources of highly efficient Departments at their backs, with memoranda prepared for them by capable subordinates, and with the advantage of having talked over matters in advance, the Chairman enjoys no such advantages. He has no Department, no Secretariat, no Staff. In so far as he forms an opinion upon the papers or telegrams that come in before a meeting he has to form it alone. He takes the chair without any idea what the Departments concerned may have in their minds or be about to propose.

This is an exceedingly difficult task, and I have never concealed my view that if such a Committee as the Eastern Committee is to survive the war, or even if the area which it supervises is to remain a main theatre of British and Indian political and military action, a Secretary of State for the Middle East will be required, with

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the full resources and personnel of a Department behind him, and with authority over his own men.

But I do not raise that issue now, because we are dealing with a temporary and critical emergency, which we have to meet with such devices as we can, and because radical reconstruction is for the moment out of the question. When the war is over the experience of the Eastern Committee may be of considerable value in guiding the then Government to a more comprehensive and permanent solution.

9. Whether there should be Middle East Departments of the Foreign Office and War Office is a matter which may safely be left to them to decide.

10. The proposal to hand over to the Indian Government full political and military control of the countries lying to the east of Palestine, or indeed of any portion of them, other than the areas already assigned or transferred, has been so adversely criticised from every quarter that it is unnecessary to pursue the argument. Whether we regard the feelings of the peoples and Governments concerned, the attitude of our Allies, or the effect on public opinion in general, it cannot, I think, be doubted that any such change of policy would be a source both of weakness and of misunderstanding. Probably no Viceroy of India in modern times has taken a more active interest in the affairs of Persia and contiguous countries than myself. But if I had been asked, when in India, to assume political control at Teheran, I would have preferred to be excused on the ground that the Eye of Persia still looks West rather than East, and that her politics are not Indian but international.

The division between the spheres of the Foreign Office and the Government of India is no doubt to some extent arbitrary and illogical, and when we get a Middle East Department and Secretary of State it will in any case be modified, and will perhaps disappear. But meanwhile we must get along with a not unworkable compromise. It is no doubt disagreeable for the Government of India to be, so to speak, yoked with a colleague at Teheran who is pursuing a not necessarily identical policy, and who takes his orders from London. But it would be not only disagreeable but dangerous to have a Minister at Teheran who might be pursuing a policy inspired or dictated from Delhi, that did not fit in with the foreign policy of Downing Street.

Generally, I concur in Mr. Balfour's view that we are not dealing unsuccessfully with a complex situation, and that for the present no substantial changes are required.

(Initialled.) C. of K.

August 1, 1918.

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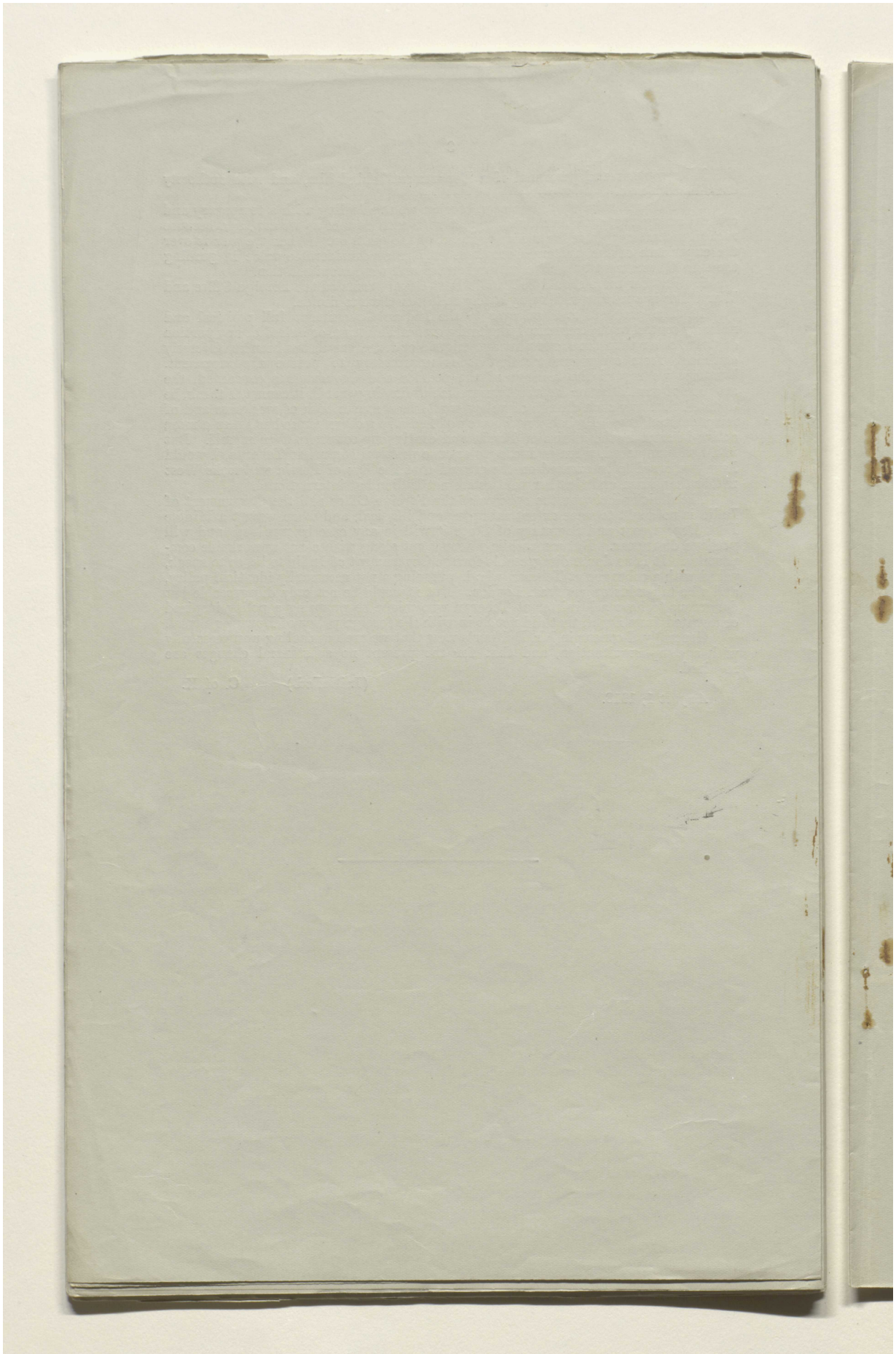

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Lord Curzon (82)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. August 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 23rd Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, August 8, 1918, at 4·15 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B. (representing the Secretary of State for India).

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P. (representing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B. (representing the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

The French Syrian Question.

1. THE Committee had before them a memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes (E.C.–1028) (Appendix) suggesting an order of procedure to clear up the situation in the event of the occupation of Syrian areas, which were of special interest to France, by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

Lord R. Cecil explained that Sir Mark Sykes (who was unable to attend the meeting) had discussed the question on various occasions with M. Picot, who had shown considerable reluctance to giving any undertaking on behalf of his Government in regard to Syria. Lord Robert, with a view to tying the French Government down, had suggested to Sir Mark Sykes that it would be necessary to introduce in drafts (A) and (B) (attached to the memorandum) a proviso relating to our agreements with the King of the Hedjaz. The point was to ensure beforehand that the French, if and when we entered Syria, should not make use of our military forces in order to carry out a policy which was at variance with our general engagements. As regards France, the policy of our Government was, when we entered Syria, to place the French civil administration on the same footing as our own administration in Palestine. The object of the joint declarations was to show our disinterestedness, and also to get rid of the objectionable "imperialistic" features of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The French were particularly anxious that it should be laid down that their advisers should have political as well as civil functions. Lord Robert informed the Committee that the drafts had been discussed but not agreed upon between Sir Mark Sykes and M. Picot.

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General Smuts was of opinion that draft "A" went rather beyond the terms of War Office telegram to the G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt, (E.C. 1017) and he suggested that the last four lines of the draft should be eliminated or amended.

General Macdonogh said that he agreed with General Smuts and reminded the Committee that General Allenby, in his telegram of the 26th July (E.C.-953) had stated :—

> "In event of my troops occupying part of Syrian areas which are regarded as of special interest to France I shall be ready to accept, subject to my supreme authority, French advice and assistance in regard to purely administrative affairs so long as they do not conflict with military requirements."

This appeared to be as far as it was necessary to go. General Macdonogh also drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that the proper designation of General Allenby was "G.O.C.-in-C., Egypt," not "Commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force" as suggested in the drafts.

The Chairman thought that the proposed agreements required revision. It was obvious that very great care must be exercised in the final drafting of the pronouncements, and he suggested that the Foreign Office should re-draft the annexures to Sir Mark Sykes' memorandum, and that the matter should be brought up again at a future meeting.

This was agreed to.

Arabia : Anglo-French Agreements

2. The Chairman reminded the Committee that about six months previously an attempt had been made by His Majesty's Government to reach an agreement with the French in regard to the whole Arabian question, arising out of the Hedjaz policy, the agreement to include Muscat. The French, taking advantage of our reluctance to proclaim a protectorate there, had tried to claim absolute equality with us in the Hedjaz, where our interests were necessarily predominant. The War Cabinet had, at the time, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Lord Curzon, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to meet a French Minister and M. Picot at the Foreign Office, with a view to arriving at an agreement. A form of words had been drawn up for submission to the French Government, but he had heard nothing of it since. The Chairman thought it highly desirable to clear up the whole situation before the end of the war, and to regularise the position in the Hedjaz, where it was difficult to define a preferential status for ourselves short of a protectorate which was impossible, but where a failure to arrive at any solution would inevitably produce friction between the French and ourselves at a later date. In Lord Curzon's opinion, the analogy of Afghanistan might possibly be applicable.

Lord Robert Cecil said that the matter had been nearly resuscitated in the course of the last week or two over the question of Italian guns for the Hedjaz. A draft declaration had been prepared in his department, and had been submitted to the High Commissioner at Cairo, who considered that it went too far. Lord Robert said that he had then suggested reviving the old declaration, but this had been negatived ; and all we had committed ourselves to so far was "a desire that the Holy Places should be independent during the war." His own view was that it might be clearly laid down that nobody but ourselves could be permitted to interfere in the external affairs of the Hedjaz. Lord Robert, who undertook to furnish copies of the draft declaration to members, further informed the Committee that Cherchali had left the Hedjaz, and that his successor was reported not to be confining himself, as his Government had agreed, to purely commercial interests.

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Sir R. Graham said that the French had agreed to deal with the Muscat and Sheikh Saad questions as part of the Anglo-French negotiations regarding Egypt and Morocco.

The Committee agreed—

That it was desirable to arrive at a definite amicable understanding with the French about Arabian questions generally, and that the discussion should be resumed when members were in possession of the Foreign Office revised draft declaration.

South Persia: Military and Political Control.

3. The Chairman said that, as regards the question of political and military control in South Persia, which had been revived by the recent Sykes-Gough dispute, some of the recent telegrams from India appear to require elucidation. On the 30th July India had wired to Gough (E.C.–982): "So long as military situation exists, General Officer Commanding must, in accordance with usual practice, be in general political as well as military control, but Sykes understands that in such circumstances you are *ex-officio* his Chief Political Officer and Adviser, to whose advice he must give fullest weight. . . . Hotson starts shortly to relieve you." Then on the 5th August the Viceroy had wired to the India Office (E.C.–1058): "Hopeless *impassé* between Gough and Sykes impresses us more than ever with impossibility of separating military from political control. Military control must necessarily be retained in our hands, and until situation clears, it seems to us essential that political control of Fars should be vested in us also." Then, three hours later on the same day, the Viceroy had telegraphed to Sykes—"The Government have accordingly decided that a military situation no longer exists at Shiraz, and that consul should therefore once more assume exclusive political control, Inspector-General reverting to his original functions. Sykes's contention that he should exercise supreme political control so long as Indian troops are present in South Persia under his command and liable to undertake active military operations at a moment's notice appears to the Government of India untenable." The Chairman said that he found it difficult to reconcile these messages, and he further pointed out that the British consul in Fars was already under the Government of India.

Mr. Shuckburgh explained that there was no intention of removing Colonel Gough, who was merely proceeding on leave and would be temporarily replaced by Hotson. The second of the messages referred, he thought, to the immediate situation, and the third to the larger, general, question of control. The Government of India's view was that Sykes should exercise both political and military control only while a "military situation" existed. But they still wished that they themselves should have a more decisive voice in matters of policy in the Shiraz area, which were at present controlled from Teheran.

The Committee agreed with the views expressed in the Government of India telegram of the 5th August (E.C.–1059) and that any change in the Command of the South Persia Rifles, which might eventually be regarded as necessary, could not be made until the present situation cleared.

Bakhtiari-land.

4. The Chairman referred to a telegram from Baghdad, dated 27th July (E.C.–958), submitting certain proposals in which the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief had concurred, with a view to stabilising the situation in Ispahan, and of maintaining the authority of the Ilkhani in Bakhtiari territories as the one effective means of protecting the oil-fields. These proposals were regarded by Sir C. Marling (E.C.–1002) with considerable misgivings, as he

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thought it unwise to extend too much authority to one man (Sirdar Zaffar).

Mr. Shuckburgh stated that the India Office were preparing a note on the subject, which would be circulated to members before the next meeting.

(The discussion was adjourned.)

Tehran: Persian Government.

5. The Committee took note of Foreign Office telegram No. 401, dated 7th August, to Sir C. Marling (E.C.–1070), empowering Marling to express to Vossugh-ed-Dowleh, if he thought desirable, the pleasure with which His Majesty's Government had learned of Vossugh's accession to office, and assuring him of our support. The telegram further suggested that Marling should consider whether action was now possible in the sense of Foreign Office telegram No. 347 of the 29th July (E.C.–672).

American Relief Mission to Persia: Mr. Judson.

6. The Committee had before them a memorandum by Lord Robert Cecil (E.C.–1027) regarding the American Relief Expedition, which was going to Persia under the leadership of Mr. Judson, the head of Chicago University.

Lord Robert Cecil said that the Mission had two objects—first, to distribute relief (with practically unlimited credit at its back) and, second, to collect information. Lord Robert said that he had seen Mr. Judson, who was most anxious to work in with us in every way. It was impossible for us to stop the Mission without giving grave offence to the United States. At the same time, the unlimited funds which the Mission could dispose of might very seriously affect the exchange in Persia. He thought that this should be explained to Mr. Judson, as well as the nature of our policy in Persia, which was not aggrandisement, but only designed to put Persia on her legs and avoid a great military danger to the Allied cause. He thought that, before facilities were given to the Mission to proceed, Mr. Judson should give an undertaking that he would do nothing without consultation with Sir P. Cox. Although there was no need at all to doubt the good faith of this Mission, Sir William Wiseman had recently telegraphed to the Foreign Office saying that an eye should be kept upon some of these Missions, as the Persians were quite disposed to intrigue with the United States and to complain to them of Russian and British oppression. The Persians had also suggested that the gendarmerie should be officered by Americans.

The Chairman agreed with Lord Robert Cecil and thought that the last suggestion might ultimately be welcome, since on the whole, the United States were more likely to be friendly to us in Persia than any European nation. It was very desirable that the Mission should be encouraged to go to places where British interests were at present predominant and where it might exercise a beneficial influence on the situation. Apart from the question of the exchange, he thought that the lavish expenditure of cash by the Mission might really be advantageous. He suggested that Mr. Oliphant should see Mr. Judson and explain that it had been no wish of ours to send armed forces to North-West Persia, and that we were only there in our own defence and for the general purposes of the Allies and, indeed, in the interests of Persia herself.

Mr. Oliphant said that he had arranged to see Mr. Judson on the following day, and would hold language to him in this sense. Although the Treasury were apprehensive about the exchange, they were, of course, prepared to support the Government policy if it was decided to let the Mission proceed. He had made an appointment for a Treasury official to discuss the exchange question with

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Mr. Judson. Mr. Oliphant also alluded to the decision taken in February to deprecate French co-operation in Persia, and submitted for consideration whether to give support now to the Americans might not raise a difficult point with the French.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that the India Office proposed to telegraph privately to the Viceroy about the Mission, explaining the situation.

The Committee decided—

That facilities should be given to Mr. Judson's Mission to proceed to Persia subject to the following provisos :—

(1.) *That, before the Mission started, our policy in Persia and the question of the exchange should be carefully explained to Mr. Judson.*

(2.) *That Mr. Judson should give an undertaking that he would do nothing without consulting Sir P. Cox.*

(3.) *That the Mission should be directed to those parts of Persia where British influence was predominant.*

Baku and the Caucasus.

7. General Macdonogh said that the Baku garrison originally held a position some 40 miles from the town. This, however, had been turned from the north and a new position had been taken up, which was only 4 versts from Baku, which was consequently under shell fire. The enemy had at present only 10 guns and some 7,000 Turks and Tartars. Opposing them were a miscellaneous crowd of 8,000 combatants under five different leaders, and about 40 guns. Our own reinforcements proceeding in that direction were 8 armoured cars, 360 men of the North Staffords, 2 machine gun sections, and, in addition, 7 officers and 40 other ranks which had been sent up by Dunsterville. Stokes had gone to Baku and was trying to get into touch with Bicharakov, who had moved to Chachmas on the 4th August. According to the fleet, Bicharakov was coming south, but this report had not been confirmed. Stokes further stated (E.C.–1073) that it was impossible to arrange for the destruction of the oil-fields as the latter were full of Tartar workmen who were pro-Turk and unwilling to destroy the means of their own livelihood, while a number of Russian troops were similarly interested. General Macdonogh said that the principal object of our troops now at, or on their way to, Baku was to get the fleet away from that place to Enzeli or Krasnovodsk. Most of the fleet was said to have gone to Astrakhan, whence it was reported that it might be employed in transporting Bolsheviks to Krasnovodsk. We had cut one of the pipe-lines, but the damage caused had been insignificant. In reply to questions, General Macdonogh said it would be quite possible to run off the reservoirs into the sea if we could get control of them, and also to drop incendiary bombs on the reservoirs, though this might cause great loss of life to the local inhabitants.

Lord Robert Cecil enquired whether the Admiralty fully realised that the key to the whole situation was the control of the Caspian.

After a brief discussion, the Committee decided :—

(a.) *That Lord Robert Cecil should arrange to meet an officer of the Naval Staff and the Director of Military Intelligence to discuss measures to be taken to secure control of the Caspian, and to report the result to the Committee.*

(b.) *That the War Office should again telegraph to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Mesopotamia, urging the supreme importance of destroying the pipe-lines and reservoirs, if by any means practicable.*

General Macdonogh, proceeding, explained the position of enemy forces in the Caucasus. At present the only troops in front of Baku were the 5th Caucasian Corps, which was not of high fighting value. He thought that, against the existing enemy, we had a chance

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of being able to hold Baku, where our garrison would not be in danger so long as they had shipping to get them away. The best defensive position for Baku was about 15 miles out. As regards German troops, these were being brought into the Caucasus by degrees; four battalions were already there and two more were on their way. The Germans were probably experiencing considerable transport difficulties, but it was no doubt that they meant eventually to undertake an offensive in Azerbaijan. The 5th Turkish Division was at, or about, Urumia; its intention was to dispose of the Jelus, whom, unfortunately, we were unable to assist, and to get into touch with the 6th Army, while the 11th Caucasus Division was to concentrate at Tabriz and reconnoitre towards Mianeh. The Turkish plan was possibly to evacuate Armenia, and to bring up a force in the Urumia–Tabriz area of 7 divisions, which might provide a force of about 12,000 rifles, for an advance on Kasvin. The Turks evidently did not wish to be entirely dependent on the German lines of communication from Georgia, and were anxious to start alternative lines from Erzerum, and also further south through Mardin and Karput.

The Strategical Situation.

8. General Smuts said that the strategical situation in Persia was one which must give rise to the gravest apprehensions. The Turks were withdrawing from in front of Mosul with the intention of concentrating against our forces on the Hamadan-Resht road, whereby our whole position in Persia would be exposed and turned. He thought it the duty of the Committee to examine the whole situation most carefully with the least possible delay, and to ascertain both the probable strength of forces that might be brought against us, and the maximum number of troops we might be able to oppose to them. Our line of communication was strategically bad, as it was parallel to the front of the enemy's advance, and simply invited attack. He enquired if we could not find and prepare alternative lines of communication, say from Bushire or Bundar Abbas, through Shiraz and Ispahan.

General Macdonogh agreed that, stragetically, the situation was bad. There appeared to be three alternatives :—

(*a.*) To run a railway from Khanikin to Kasvin. This would take at least a year, and to carry it over the Tak-i Ghirreh pass would be a very difficult engineering feat. Over the pass itself a ropeway might be all that would be possible.

(*b.*) To run a railway from Ahwaz to Khoremabad, and thence to Hamadan. This route had been surveyed, and was feasible, and the project would be sound strategically. If this were done, we might feel confident about our power to resist a Turkish advance unsupported by German troops.

(*c.*) To carry a line up the Tigris and into North-West Persia, over the Varna pass, which was much less formidable than the Tak-i-Ghirreh. This would not be a good line for the support of our troops on the road, but it would threaten the enemy's flank, and attract his troops into Mesopotamia.

Any railway, to be really useful, would take at least a year to construct, and the great difficulty about motor transport was the oil supply, which would be very greatly facilitated if oil could be brought from Baku to Enzeli.

The Chairman, speaking from personal experience, said that the country from Bushire to Shiraz was impracticable as a main line of advance, although north of Shiraz it was easy. A railway from Dizful, where the plains ended, towards Khoremabad, would also

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have to be carried over successive ranges of mountains, and through a territory infested with hostile Lurs. He himself suggested a fourth alternative route, from Ahwaz or Shustar, following the Karun River through Bakhtiariland, where the tribes were friendly, along the Lynch road, which was already practicable for motors. In this way a new front might be created from the Gulf to Ispahan. In the last resort, should we be driven from our positions in the west and centre of Persia, it might be necessary to push on the Mirjawa extension into East Persia, and build up a fresh position in order to cover Afghanistan.

Lord Robert Cecil thought no time should be lost in deciding on the alternative line, and in getting to work on it at once. He again urged the importance of the Caspian, as, if we controlled it, we could always withdraw our troops from the Hamadan road by sea.

The Committee agreed—

That the question required immediate and most careful consideration, and decided—

That the General Staff should be asked to examine the question in all its bearings without delay, and to submit to the Committee an appreciation of the situation, which should include their recommendations in respect of alternative lines of communication and defence.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
August 8, 1918.

[P.T.O.

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APPENDIX.

E.C.–1028.

I CIRCULATE to my colleagues a Minute and three drafts by Sir Mark Sykes with which I agree.

ROBERT CECIL.

August 3, 1918.

Memorandum by Sir M. Sykes.

I think that the order of procedure to clear up the French-Syrian question should be as follows:—

1. The French ask us what is to be the French position in Syria in the event of occupation, to which we should reply as Draft (A).

2. The French then ask us what will be the position of the French in regard to political relations with native elements permanently resident in that part of Syria still in Turkish occupation, to which we should reply as Draft (B).

We must, however, insert a proviso in both these replies to the effect that the policy of the French Mission shall be in accordance with the spirit of the proposed joint declaration to the King of Hedjaz (see Draft (C)).

3. We then arrange to present the joint declaration to the King of the Hedjaz (Draft (C)).

MARK SYKES.

August 3, 1918.

Draft (*A*).

In the event of the occupation by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force of Syrian areas which are of special interest to France, the General Officer Commanding Egyptian Expeditionary Force will, with due regard to military considerations, and, subject to the supreme authority of the C.I.C., recognise the Chief of the French Mission attached to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force as his adviser on matters pertaining to any administration of a civil character which it may be necessary to set up in such areas, and will rely on the Chief of the French Mission to provide the administrative personnel for the purpose of carrying on the administration.

Draft (*B*).

In the event of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force occupying Syrian areas of special interest to France, the C.I.C. Egyptian Expeditionary Force will recognise the Chief of the French Mission as his direct political adviser in regard to any negotiations which it may be necessary to enter into with the native elements permanently inhabiting Syrian areas of special interest to France but still in Turkish occupation. Subject to the C.I.C.'s supreme authority, the head of the French Mission will organise and control the machinery whereby such negotiations are to be carried out.

Draft (*C*).

Declaration to the King of Hedjaz.

The Governments of Great Britain and France desire jointly to inform the Government of Hedjaz that their policy in regard to the Arabic-speaking peoples of Arabia, Syria, Jazirah, and Irak is as follows:—

1. The two Governments desire to make it clear to the Government of Hedjaz and to the Arabic-speaking peoples in the above-mentioned regions, that on the part of neither Government has there ever been any intention of disposing of them, nor allowing them to be disposed of by any other party, in any way other than is desired by the populations thereof.

2. The two Governments further wish to make it clear that they desire to facilitate to the utmost co-operation, alliance, and unity of purpose among the various elements of the Arabic-speaking peoples in the above-mentioned regions with a view to the ultimate restoration of the liberty and prosperity which these areas formerly enjoyed.

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Lord Curzon.

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Printed for the War Cabinet. September 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 24 A.

WAR CABINET. 4

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Tuesday, August 13, 1918, at 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

General Sir H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

The War in the East: Functions of the Eastern Committee.

THE Committee had before them a paper by the Secretary of State for India, entitled "The War in the East" (E.C.–718) together with notes on the said paper by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the Foreign Office, and the Chairman (E.C.–809, E.C.–978, and E.C.–1008) (Appendix).

Mr. Montagu said that it would shorten the discussion if he withdrew at once two suggestions he had put forward in his paper for consideration, not because he had altered his view, but because it was obvious from the papers that had circulated that he would not obtain the assent of his colleagues. It seemed to be agreed, for no member of the Committee had supported his proposal, that the conduct of the war in the East, or any part of it, could not be given over to India or to any organisation outside London. The members of the Committee opposed the proposal to do this, and the military advisers of the Committee also objected.

He desired, however, that it should be placed on record that, however large the theatre which the war embraced, however great the extension eastward, the Committee and their advisers appeared unwilling to consider any devolution of management, which apparently could only be permitted in the case of very small wars, such as the war in German South-West Africa or the Pacific Islands. This view would appear to result inevitably in ever-increasing responsibilities on those already overburdened in London. But, in view of what had been written, he did not see any use in pressing his views further.

The second point which he felt that in view of opposition he must abandon was his suggestion that political and military control in Persia should be harmonised. Mr. Montagu said that he had pointed out the difficulties already caused by the welter of conflicting

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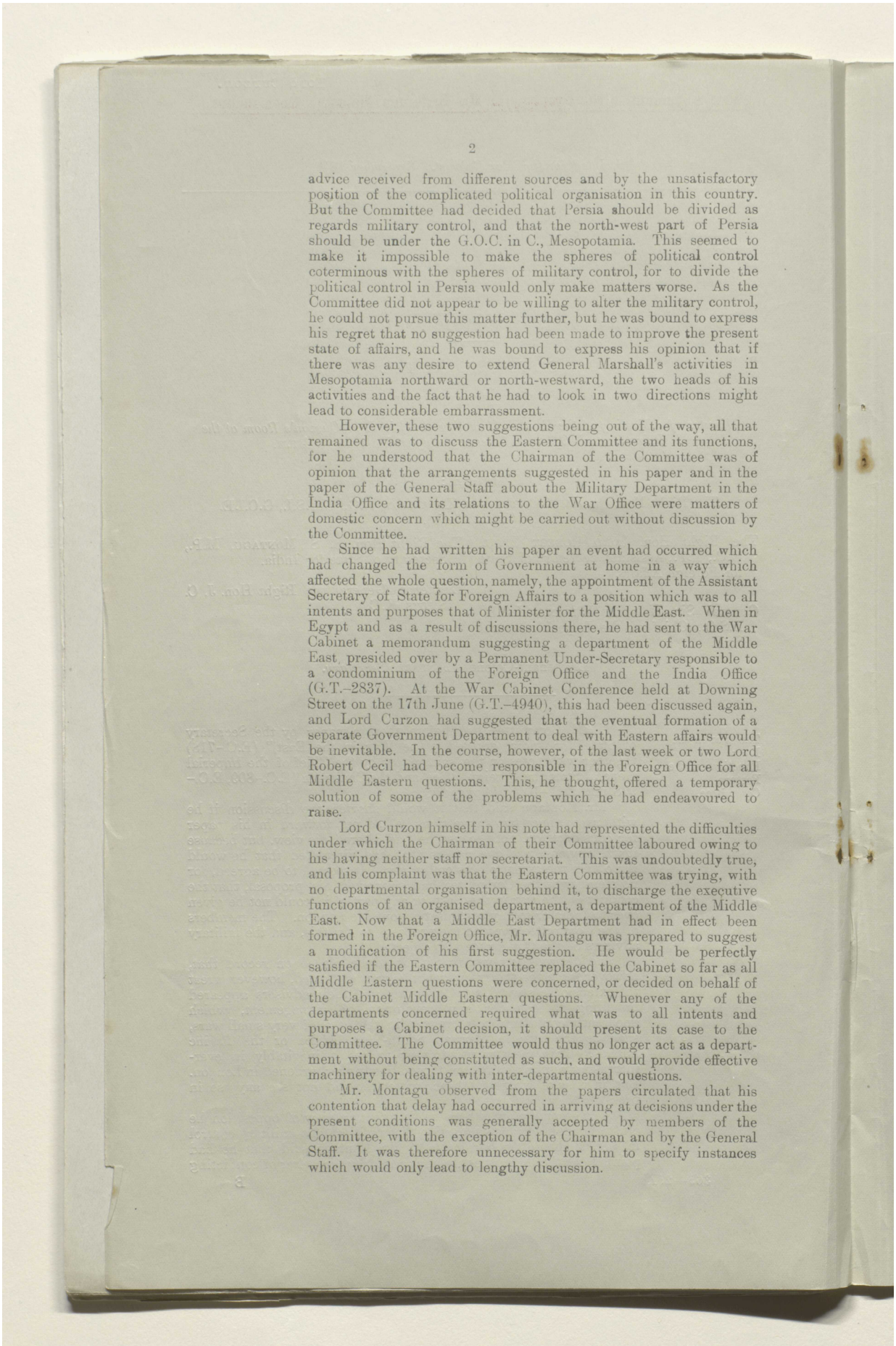

advice received from different sources and by the unsatisfactory position of the complicated political organisation in this country. But the Committee had decided that Persia should be divided as regards military control, and that the north-west part of Persia should be under the G.O.C. in C., Mesopotamia. This seemed to make it impossible to make the spheres of political control coterminous with the spheres of military control, for to divide the political control in Persia would only make matters worse. As the Committee did not appear to be willing to alter the military control, he could not pursue this matter further, but he was bound to express his regret that no suggestion had been made to improve the present state of affairs, and he was bound to express his opinion that if there was any desire to extend General Marshall's activities in Mesopotamia northward or north-westward, the two heads of his activities and the fact that he had to look in two directions might lead to considerable embarrassment.

However, these two suggestions being out of the way, all that remained was to discuss the Eastern Committee and its functions, for he understood that the Chairman of the Committee was of opinion that the arrangements suggested in his paper and in the paper of the General Staff about the Military Department in the India Office and its relations to the War Office were matters of domestic concern which might be carried out without discussion by the Committee.

Since he had written his paper an event had occurred which had changed the form of Government at home in a way which affected the whole question, namely, the appointment of the Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to a position which was to all intents and purposes that of Minister for the Middle East. When in Egypt and as a result of discussions there, he had sent to the War Cabinet a memorandum suggesting a department of the Middle East presided over by a Permanent Under-Secretary responsible to a condominium of the Foreign Office and the India Office (G.T.–2837). At the War Cabinet Conference held at Downing Street on the 17th June (G.T.–4940), this had been discussed again, and Lord Curzon had suggested that the eventual formation of a separate Government Department to deal with Eastern affairs would be inevitable. In the course, however, of the last week or two Lord Robert Cecil had become responsible in the Foreign Office for all Middle Eastern questions. This, he thought, offered a temporary solution of some of the problems which he had endeavoured to raise.

Lord Curzon himself in his note had represented the difficulties under which the Chairman of their Committee laboured owing to his having neither staff nor secretariat. This was undoubtedly true, and his complaint was that the Eastern Committee was trying, with no departmental organisation behind it, to discharge the executive functions of an organised department, a department of the Middle East. Now that a Middle East Department had in effect been formed in the Foreign Office, Mr. Montagu was prepared to suggest a modification of his first suggestion. He would be perfectly satisfied if the Eastern Committee replaced the Cabinet so far as all Middle Eastern questions were concerned, or decided on behalf of the Cabinet Middle Eastern questions. Whenever any of the departments concerned required what was to all intents and purposes a Cabinet decision, it should present its case to the Committee. The Committee would thus no longer act as a department without being constituted as such, and would provide effective machinery for dealing with inter-departmental questions.

Mr. Montagu observed from the papers circulated that his contention that delay had occurred in arriving at decisions under the present conditions was generally accepted by members of the Committee, with the exception of the Chairman and by the General Staff. It was therefore unnecessary for him to specify instances which would only lead to lengthy discussion.

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The Chairman denied that this was the case, and stated that he could recall no single instance where delay had occurred either in assembling a meeting of the Committee or in arriving at a decision on any point of importance, and he challenged members to cite such instances. There had been cases where decisions on matters of policy had been postponed, but always for sufficient reason; and the reason had generally been that some member had asked for time for further consideration by his department.

Mr. Montagu said he would not pursue the point. He was content to leave it with the agreement that he had received. It seemed to him inevitable that a Committee which dealt executively with various points of administration must lead to delay when the difficulty had to be met of collecting very busy men from different departments to a meeting. In a single department urgent business could be disposed of by summoning one or two officials from within the building, and he contended that the Eastern Committee should assemble only for the purpose of taking decisions on policy which might be called Cabinet decisions. All executive action ought to be taken by the new Minister for the Middle East in consultation with the other Departments and in pursuance of the policy laid down by the Committee.

Lord Robert Cecil agreed with Mr. Montagu that all questions could be disposed of much more expeditiously by a Department than by a Committee. For the Committee to meet regularly every day, for instance, would place a great deal of extra work upon the members, and also frequently involve a considerable waste of time; on the other hand, to arrange an hour convenient to half-a-dozen busy men for an occasional meeting, must mean some delay. He further agreed that a Committee, such as the Eastern Committee, without any regular staff or secretarial organisation, was not really the best instrument to deal with matters requiring executive action. He regarded the existence of a Committee, such as the Eastern Committee, as essential; and he concurred with the Secretary of State for India in thinking that it should be the Cabinet for all Middle Eastern questions. Under the existing system of government, when Departments could not agree on the line of action, they carried their disputes either to the Prime Minister direct or to the War Cabinet. He himself would like to see this arrangement adopted in the case of all matters affecting the Middle East. He admitted that most of the questions which came before the Eastern Committee were those which required a decision by the Committee. On the other hand, there were a number of day-to-day problems, *e.g.*, the Caspian fleet, or the policy to be laid down for General Malleson, for the consideration of which some lighter machinery was, in the first instance, desirable. Such matters could more conveniently be threshed out by a Sub-Committee, as had been advocated in his note, or, less formally, by assembling at the Foreign Office representatives of the three Departments concerned to decide on executive action, or to prepare the way for a discussion by the Eastern Committee. This latter alternative he had submitted to the Chairman, who had been unable to accept it. He did not for a moment suggest any change in the Chairman's functions. His point was that questions daily arose which required constant discussion by, and a close touch between, the departments, and yet were not, in their initial stages, important enough to necessitate a meeting of the Committee. At present, in view of the Chairman's attitude, he confessed that he felt great diffidence even about inviting one or two officials from other departments to any informal preliminary discussion; and he was sometimes disposed to wonder where his own personal responsibility began and ended. Between each meeting of the Committee a mass of telegrams and papers were circulated, and it was practically impossible for individual members to handle them all satisfactorily—so much so that he personally doubted if any member knew from day to day exactly where we stood in regard to

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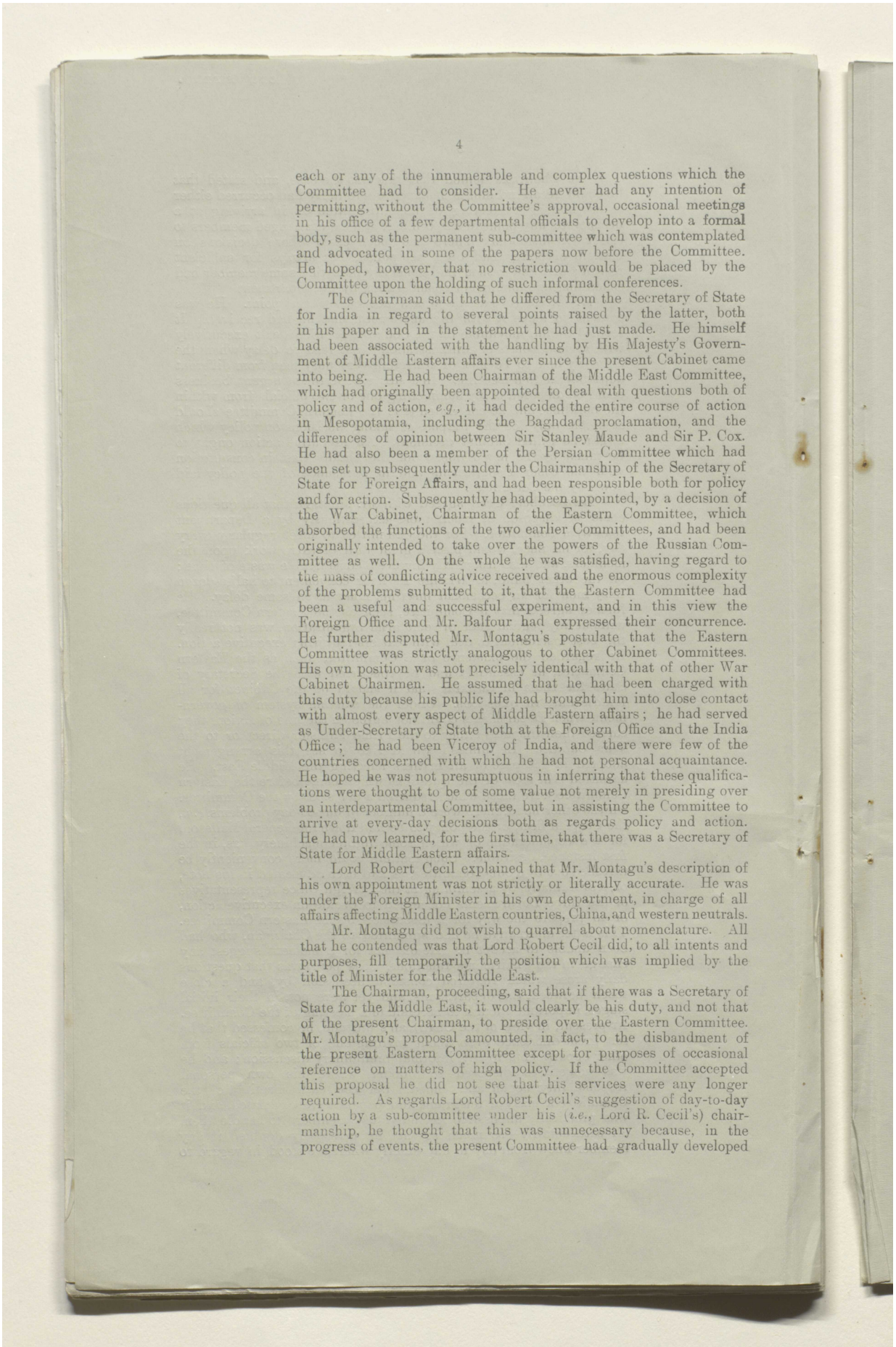

each or any of the innumerable and complex questions which the Committee had to consider. He never had any intention of permitting, without the Committee's approval, occasional meetings in his office of a few departmental officials to develop into a formal body, such as the permanent sub-committee which was contemplated and advocated in some of the papers now before the Committee. He hoped, however, that no restriction would be placed by the Committee upon the holding of such informal conferences.

The Chairman said that he differed from the Secretary of State for India in regard to several points raised by the latter, both in his paper and in the statement he had just made. He himself had been associated with the handling by His Majesty's Government of Middle Eastern affairs ever since the present Cabinet came into being. He had been Chairman of the Middle East Committee, which had originally been appointed to deal with questions both of policy and of action, *e.g.*, it had decided the entire course of action in Mesopotamia, including the Baghdad proclamation, and the differences of opinion between Sir Stanley Maude and Sir P. Cox. He had also been a member of the Persian Committee which had been set up subsequently under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and had been responsible both for policy and for action. Subsequently he had been appointed, by a decision of the War Cabinet, Chairman of the Eastern Committee, which absorbed the functions of the two earlier Committees, and had been originally intended to take over the powers of the Russian Committee as well. On the whole he was satisfied, having regard to the mass of conflicting advice received and the enormous complexity of the problems submitted to it, that the Eastern Committee had been a useful and successful experiment, and in this view the Foreign Office and Mr. Balfour had expressed their concurrence. He further disputed Mr. Montagu's postulate that the Eastern Committee was strictly analogous to other Cabinet Committees. His own position was not precisely identical with that of other War Cabinet Chairmen. He assumed that he had been charged with this duty because his public life had brought him into close contact with almost every aspect of Middle Eastern affairs; he had served as Under-Secretary of State both at the Foreign Office and the India Office; he had been Viceroy of India, and there were few of the countries concerned with which he had not personal acquaintance. He hoped he was not presumptuous in inferring that these qualifications were thought to be of some value not merely in presiding over an interdepartmental Committee, but in assisting the Committee to arrive at every-day decisions both as regards policy and action. He had now learned, for the first time, that there was a Secretary of State for Middle Eastern affairs.

Lord Robert Cecil explained that Mr. Montagu's description of his own appointment was not strictly or literally accurate. He was under the Foreign Minister in his own department, in charge of all affairs affecting Middle Eastern countries, China, and western neutrals.

Mr. Montagu did not wish to quarrel about nomenclature. All that he contended was that Lord Robert Cecil did, to all intents and purposes, fill temporarily the position which was implied by the title of Minister for the Middle East.

The Chairman, proceeding, said that if there was a Secretary of State for the Middle East, it would clearly be his duty, and not that of the present Chairman, to preside over the Eastern Committee. Mr. Montagu's proposal amounted, in fact, to the disbandment of the present Eastern Committee except for purposes of occasional reference on matters of high policy. If the Committee accepted this proposal he did not see that his services were any longer required. As regards Lord Robert Cecil's suggestion of day-to-day action by a sub-committee under his (*i.e.*, Lord R. Cecil's) chairmanship, he thought that this was unnecessary because, in the progress of events, the present Committee had gradually developed

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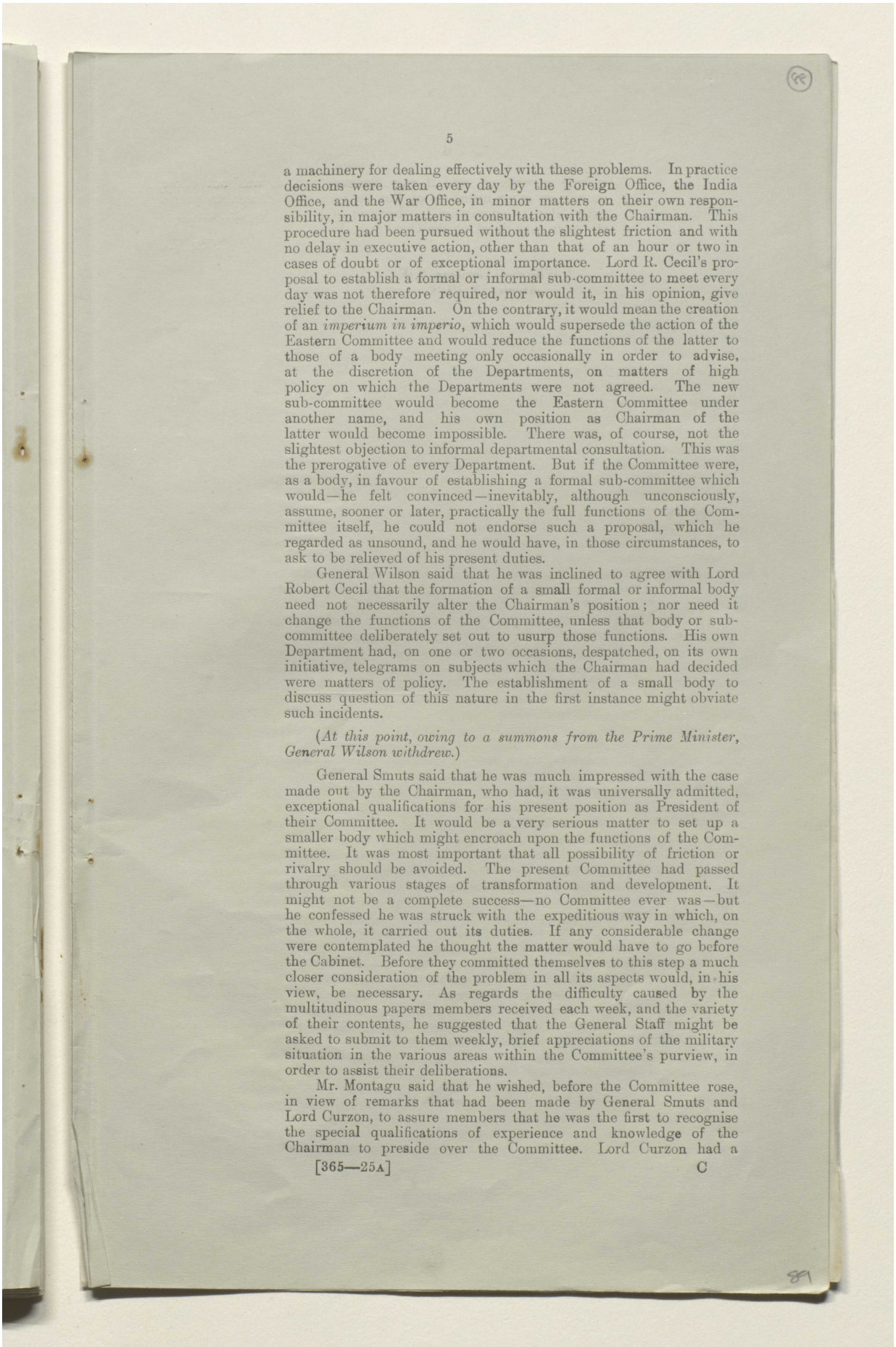

a machinery for dealing effectively with these problems. In practice decisions were taken every day by the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the War Office, in minor matters on their own responsibility, in major matters in consultation with the Chairman. This procedure had been pursued without the slightest friction and with no delay in executive action, other than that of an hour or two in cases of doubt or of exceptional importance. Lord R. Cecil's proposal to establish a formal or informal sub-committee to meet every day was not therefore required, nor would it, in his opinion, give relief to the Chairman. On the contrary, it would mean the creation of an *imperium in imperio*, which would supersede the action of the Eastern Committee and would reduce the functions of the latter to those of a body meeting only occasionally in order to advise, at the discretion of the Departments, on matters of high policy on which the Departments were not agreed. The new sub-committee would become the Eastern Committee under another name, and his own position as Chairman of the latter would become impossible. There was, of course, not the slightest objection to informal departmental consultation. This was the prerogative of every Department. But if the Committee were, as a body, in favour of establishing a formal sub-committee which would—he felt convinced—inevitably, although unconsciously, assume, sooner or later, practically the full functions of the Committee itself, he could not endorse such a proposal, which he regarded as unsound, and he would have, in those circumstances, to ask to be relieved of his present duties.

General Wilson said that he was inclined to agree with Lord Robert Cecil that the formation of a small formal or informal body need not necessarily alter the Chairman's position; nor need it change the functions of the Committee, unless that body or sub-committee deliberately set out to usurp those functions. His own Department had, on one or two occasions, despatched, on its own initiative, telegrams on subjects which the Chairman had decided were matters of policy. The establishment of a small body to discuss question of this nature in the first instance might obviate such incidents.

(*At this point, owing to a summons from the Prime Minister, General Wilson withdrew.*)

General Smuts said that he was much impressed with the case made out by the Chairman, who had, it was universally admitted, exceptional qualifications for his present position as President of their Committee. It would be a very serious matter to set up a smaller body which might encroach upon the functions of the Committee. It was most important that all possibility of friction or rivalry should be avoided. The present Committee had passed through various stages of transformation and development. It might not be a complete success—no Committee ever was—but he confessed he was struck with the expeditious way in which, on the whole, it carried out its duties. If any considerable change were contemplated he thought the matter would have to go before the Cabinet. Before they committed themselves to this step a much closer consideration of the problem in all its aspects would, in his view, be necessary. As regards the difficulty caused by the multitudinous papers members received each week, and the variety of their contents, he suggested that the General Staff might be asked to submit to them weekly, brief appreciations of the military situation in the various areas within the Committee's purview, in order to assist their deliberations.

Mr. Montagu said that he wished, before the Committee rose, in view of remarks that had been made by General Smuts and Lord Curzon, to assure members that he was the first to recognise the special qualifications of experience and knowledge of the Chairman to preside over the Committee. Lord Curzon had a

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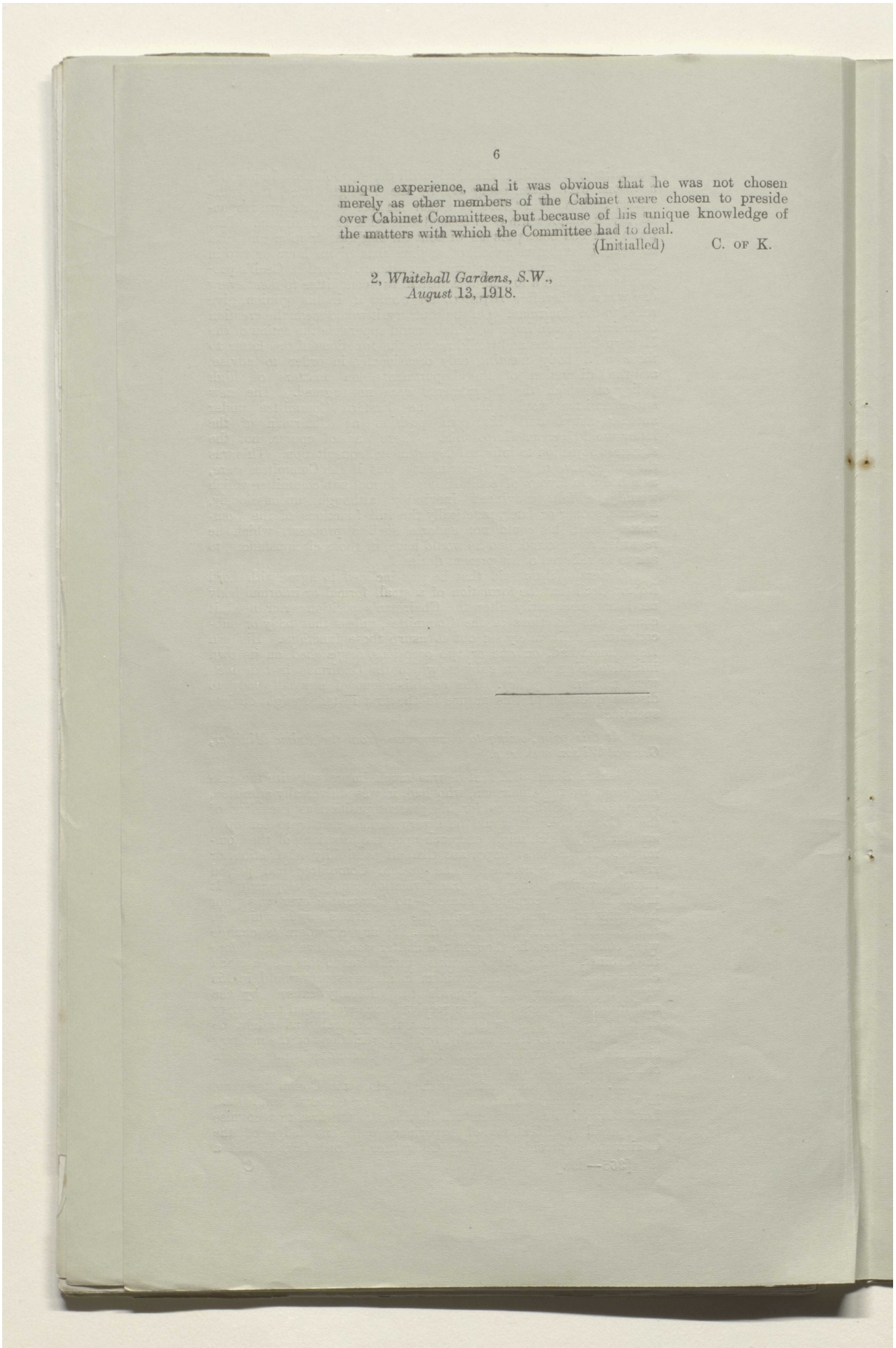

unique experience, and it was obvious that he was not chosen merely as other members of the Cabinet were chosen to preside over Cabinet Committees, but because of his unique knowledge of the matters with which the Committee had to deal.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
August 13, 1918.

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APPENDIX.

E.C.-718.

The War in the East.

I WRITE the following at the request of the meeting which I was invited to attend on the 17th June, and I write it on one hypothesis which governs all I write. If this hypothesis is dismissed as improbable, the matter is not worth consideration. Events in the West do not look as if the Germans will be deprived of all initiative as the result of this summer's campaign. It would appear to me that the most our military advisers are hopeful of obtaining is such a result in the West as would probably relieve our anxiety in the West for the rest of the war. If that be so, is it not absolutely certain that the most likely theatre in which the Germans can obtain military success is the East, and is it not humanly probable that they will naturally seek to approach peace discussions after the obliterations of our gains of enemy territory in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and if possible after some threat to our territories in the East which might produce results comparable, if not equal, to the position which they have now established in the West? Do not recent developments in the East, the appearance of the two German divisions at Batoum and Poti, and the accounts we receive of their activities, point to a probability of this kind? Is it not possible that considerable results might be looked for by organisation and by money without necessarily involving much expenditure of personnel?

I have before me as I write a Foreign Office Memorandum, dated the 8th May, recording conferences between leading German and Turkish politicians, from which I quote the following sentences:—

> "The general plan evidently is to prepare the ground by propaganda and to follow this up with military operations when and where local co-operation can be counted upon. There is no evidence that the despatch of large forces is contemplated. The idea rather seems to be to send the minimum forces that will set local movements in motion and to leave these movements to do the rest. Stress is laid on securing the command of the Black Sea and Trans-Caucasia: Northern Persia, Russian Central Asia, and Afghanistan are the objectives, and it is hoped that effects will be produced in China and India."

I assert, therefore, that there is room for believing that there is a serious menace, which will take some months to mature, in the East. These conferences were held in the winter of last year and the spring of this, and subsequent events point to an active pursuit of the policy decided upon therein. It would seem to me to be indicative that in all probability their present efforts are directed towards Trans-Caspia and Turkestan, that they are, as it were, proceeding northwards of General Marshall's activities, with a view to disturbing Afghanistan and threatening India.

I have nothing to add to the comments that I have already made on the attitude of Afghanistan.

The question to which I would ask the Cabinet to turn their attention is shortly this: Have we not on the whole neglected the East? Are we now organised to meet the threat in the East? Ought we not to prepare far more thoroughly to meet that threat? I propose to confine myself to the present and the future and to content myself with merely asking the question about the past.

The conduct of affairs in the Middle East is now vested in a Committee, of which I have the honour to be a member, under the Presidency of Lord Curzon, dealing with Middle East affairs, which are entrusted under the supervision of the Committee in their respective spheres to the Foreign Office, the War Office, and the India Office. I do not think that this is a satisfactory plan. I say nothing about the India Office, for it is impossible for me to express an unprejudiced opinion about my own Office. But it is differentiated from the others in that its whole activities are concerned with the East, with India and its defences, with India and the countries which border it, whereas the Foreign Office and the War Office have immeasurable and overwhelming responsibilities in other directions. I can also speak with certainty when I say that action has been delayed by the necessity for awaiting decisions of the Eastern Committee. It is no fault of the Committee, which is composed of men of such preoccupations as those which beset my colleagues, that they cannot meet often, that they cannot meet in practice at a moment's notice, and that when they meet it must take some time to master a situation embodied in sheafs

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of telegrams from various sources, which have to be collated and digested. Were it not for the inexhaustible capacity for work and indefatigable industry of our Chairman, I do not see how the Committee could discharge its functions at all.

In the Paper which I addressed to the War Cabinet on the 4th November last year from Egypt, I ventured to suggest that the proper method of handling the affairs of Egypt, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Persia, &c., was by a new department roughly analogous to the new Overseas Trade Department, a condominium of the Foreign Office and the India Office, and an Under-Secretary representing the new Department in Parliament. Our relations to these countries, which might range from actual possession through protectorate, but never to complete sovereignty, differentiated them in my opinion from the ordinary activities of the Foreign Office, and ought to be separated from them. They were so largely administrative and so little technically diplomatic that they seemed to me to want special recruitment and a separate cadre. This, however, was not intended as an immediate war measure. It might be preferable to have a Secretary of State for the Middle East, a remedy which I have reason to believe Lord Curzon, with the great authority of his experience, would not disfavour. This modification of my proposal would have my cordial support, for of course the new Secretary of State would act in co-operation with the other two Offices primarily concerned.

But this remedy would seem to me to be difficult, if not impossible, during war time. The difficulty of finding the personnel for a new office is very real, and during war time, at any rate, the War Office must of course be taken into account in what, as I have stated in my premises, seems to me to be developing into an important war area.

I therefore would suggest that the Eastern Committee should continue to exist. There would be advantages in making it a Committee of Ministers only, with of course expert advice and assistance available in the room at the time of its meetings. I would also suggest that it should not attempt actual executive action, but that it should be a Cabinet Committee, discussing, on behalf of the Cabinet, Cabinet matters, questions of policy, leaving details of the conduct of the policy to the Departments concerned.

It might be desirable to have a sub-committee of the Eastern Committee, consisting of an Under-Secretary of State or an Assistant Under-Secretary of State from the Foreign Office and from the India Office, with the Director of Military Intelligence from the War Office; the duties of the Sub-Committee being to thresh out everything, and to give decisions except upon matters of high policy or of such great importance as should go before the Ministers of the Committee for decision.

These are, however, merely modifications of existing procedure and composition, on which the Cabinet and the Chairman of the Committee can offer better opinion than I can attempt to do.

Turning now to the executive problem, I would discuss it first from the political standpoint, and only secondly from the military standpoint.

I would suggest as regards political affairs that the present system of obtaining political information is very unsatisfactory.

1. The system of "dual control," by which certain British Consulates in Persia are staffed by officers of the Levant Consular Service in direct subordination to the Minister at Teheran, and others by officers of the Indian Political Department, primarily responsible to the Government of India, prevailed for many years before the war. It entailed certain inconveniences and at times gave rise to friction; but on the whole it worked reasonably well as a peace-time arrangement. His Majesty's Government received recommendations, &c., independently from the Minister and from the Government of India, and in the event of a conflict of opinion, as would sometimes happen, the question was threshed out between the Foreign Office and India Office, and a decision reached after due consideration.

2. The conditions created by the war, or at any rate its recent developments in the East, have profoundly modified the situation. Persia has virtually become a theatre of hostilities. Columns of British troops are operating on the East frontier, in the North-West, and in the Fars Province in the South; while a strong local force (the South Persia Rifles) has been raised in the last-named region, nominally in the service of the Persian Government, but actually controlled and directed by ourselves.

3. Under the stress of these complications, it is not too much to say that the old system of political control has broken down. A dispute is raging at the moment between the Consul at Shiraz and the officer in command of the South Persia Rifles (Sir P. Sykes) over the latter's claims to be consulted in political matters. The

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Minister at Teheran is strongly opposed to these claims (there has been friction between him and Sir P. Sykes for some little time past) and takes exception to the instructions which the Government of India have sent to the Consul (their own officer) on the subject. On general questions of Persian policy, the divergence of opinion between the Government of India and the Minister has for months past been so wide that it was thought necessary at one stage to request the Viceroy to discontinue the practice of repeating his telegrams to Teheran, so that the Minister might not be embarrassed by diversity of counsel. The rôle of the Government of India in Persian matters is merely an advisory one, and the non-acceptance of their views does not, in itself, give them any legitimate cause of complaint; but as they have been charged with the task of maintaining the "cordon" in East Persia, as well as of supplying and reinforcing (though not controlling the operations of) the South Persia Rifles, they have acquired a direct material interest in political developments with which their influence upon policy can scarcely be regarded as commensurate.

4. Mesopotamia introduces another element of uncertainty. The supreme authority in the occupied territory is necessarily the General Officer Commanding, acting under the orders of the War Office. But the civil side of the temporary administration, which has acquired a position approaching that of semi-independence, is in subordination—somewhat ill-defined, it is true—to the Government of India. Recently the army in Mesopotamia has extended its right flank into Persian territory, with the result that a part of the *political* activities of the force have been brought within the sphere of control of the Minister at Teheran. A political officer attached to General Dunsterville's column on the Kermanshah-Hamadan road is, in fact, under three masters. He is, of course, subordinate to the local high command; as a member of the Mesopotamian political service he remains under the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, who is subordinate to the Government of India; while as a political officer in Persia he has to conform to the instructions of the Minister, who has a general responsibility for all political activities in Persian territory. Mr. Churchill, late Oriental Secretary to the Teheran Legation, is a case in point. The Foreign Office, whose servant he is, decided to attach him as a political officer to General Dunsterville's force. They acted without formal consultation either from the War Office or the India Office, and the result was that, when Mr. Churchill arrived at Baghdad, neither the General Officer Commanding nor the Civil Commissioner knew anything about his appointment, and had to telegraph home for instructions as to his disposal.

5. Some clearer definition may also be required of the status of the two Missions recently sent from India to Meshed and Kashgar respectively, with a view to ultimate penetration into Russian Turkestan. The Meshed party has been declared to be a "military" mission, and will presumably receive its instructions, through the Military Attaché at Meshed, from the Indian military authorities. But so long as it remains in Persia it must regulate its political conduct by the advice or instructions of the Minister, and there is at least the risk that the same kind of uncertainties and disagreements may arise, on a smaller scale, as have been experienced in connection with Sir P. Sykes' Mission in South Persia.

It seems to me to be essential that all the officers giving us political information in the new war area should be unified Either they should all be Foreign Office officials, or they should all be India Office officials. They should be organised under responsible authorities in order to reduce the conflict of evidence and to prevent the telegrams and answers to telegrams which evidence their differences of opinion. As an area develops into a war area it seems to me to be more and more important that the political officers should be subordinated to that authority which is controlling the military operations.

As regards the military operations, I cannot help thinking that decentralisation ought to be the main consideration, and that the Director of Military Intelligence at the War Office ought not to be burdened with all the rapidly increasing detail of work connected with war in the East, which must make such increasing demands upon him as the war spreads eastwards. I am inclined to consider whether the whole war area from Palestine eastward managed from India by the Indian Government, both militarily and politically, would not be possible, even if this involved some new war organisation in India, and it seems to me that this need not be inconsistent with the general control by the War Office of all military operations. It is for the War Office to consider whether their organisation needs strengthening for the purpose, or separating, and if so to what degree, from the organisation which deals with other theatres. This would relieve the home authorities, military and political, enormously, and having regard to the fact that the men to be used in the whole of this

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area come from India, the advantage to be gained by this arrangement would be that the conflicting demands on the common reservoir of the different areas would be adjudged by those who had knowledge of the whole of them. Failing this, it would seem to me to be best that some portion of this area should be given politically and militarily to the Government of India, strengthened and modified, if need be, for the purpose by the despatch of officers from home, and that, subject to the control of policy by the War Cabinet or the Eastern Committee on its behalf, the Government of India should be given the freest possible hand in the raising and training of adequate troops to vanquish our enemies in the areas which may from time to time be threatened. The line should, it appears to me, probably be drawn somewhere between this which has been acknowledged as including the smallest area and the very wide suggestion I have made above. I must leave this to the judgment of the War Office. I recognise the great difficulty of defining the actual area. Palestine is so linked with Egypt as possibly to make it unwise to include it in the Eastern area. South-Eastern Persia has already been transferred, but the line thus drawn makes unity of political and military control difficult.

Although I have pointed out the difficulties of the existing system with all deference and respect, I put forward these rough suggestions for decentralisation with even greater trepidation and hesitation. I am more inclined to ask the two Departments concerned, the Foreign Office and the War Office, whether they are satisfied with the present state of affairs, and whether they cannot suggest a remedy. Is there not room for a Middle East War Department, a sub-department of the War Office, to conduct the war in the East? Should this sit in England or should it sit in India or somewhere else in the East? What should be the extent of its territories? Should a sort of War Department be erected in Egypt or in Baghdad, or would the fact that the trend of war is more to the north-east than either of these areas make it desirable that it should be further East still? Is there any other suggestion which would tend to decentralisation? The same questions that I would ask of the War Office I would also ask of the Foreign Office, substituting political for military considerations and drawing their attention to the necessity of combining these two aspects of the problem.

E. S. M.

July 5, 1918.

P.S.—I append a telegram from the Viceroy, dated the 9th July, relevant to the question discussed in this note.

Telegram from Viceroy, dated the 9th July, 1918.

Secret. Spheres of control. Your telegram of 4th instant. With every desire to avoid controversy, we feel it our duty to state plainly our difficulties in regard to Persia. We have throughout had before us the principle that policy must be dictated by military force available to support it. This principle we feel has not been sufficiently borne in mind in the adoption of the policy of force recommended by Minister at Teheran, who appears neither to have appreciated the force available nor understood the necessary limitations, namely, supply, transport, &c., to its application. The result has been failure at Teheran, combined with serious and indefinite military commitments elsewhere, which are calculated to react unfavourably throughout the Middle East, especially on Afghanistan, which is the pivot of the problem. This policy we have persistently, perhaps, importunately, opposed, but to no purpose. Indeed, by your instructions we have, since the middle of March, been debarred even from repeating our views to the Minister.

With the Turco-German menace before us, we considered our policy should be to secure the friendship as far as possible of the countries that form the glacis of India. To this end we recommended a policy of national conciliation in Persia, coupled with removal of the main causes of irritation, and this would, we believe, have secured a genuinely friendly Persian Government and people, and obviated the present embarrassments. As it is, we are confronted with trouble from the Gulf to the Caspian, with further trouble threatening. The divorce between political and military control is mainly responsible for these conditions, and it was danger involved in continuing in this system with military operations actually in progress that prompted our telegram of the 1st July.

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E.C.-809.

NOTE ON MR. MONTAGU'S MEMORANDUM "THE WAR IN THE EAST."

The War Office can accept the general argument underlying the preamble of Mr. Montagu's memorandum, namely, that when the enemy's effort in the West is suspended, he is likely to seek a military success in the East. Possibly too great a measure of certainty is attached to this assumption, but the principle forms a sound basis not only for discussion but for precautionary measures, both political and military.

2. The second part of the memorandum deals with the constitution of the Eastern Committee. Mr. Montagu's statement that the present organisation inevitably leads to action being frequently delayed cannot be disputed. Not only is action delayed owing to the necessity of obtaining the sanction of the Committee to every step taken in the execution of policy already laid down by the Committee, but a ruling as to important questions of policy has on several occasions been postponed from one meeting to another owing to the fact that the Committee is overburdened with executive action. To remedy this, Mr. Montagu makes the following suggestions:—

(*a*.) The Eastern Committee should be a Committee of Ministers only, with expert advice available at the time of its sittings.

(*b*.) The Committee should not attempt actual executive action, but that it should, as a Cabinet Committee, discuss questions of high policy, leaving details of the conduct of the policy to the Departments concerned.

(*c*.) That a sub-committee composed as follows should be set up:—

An Under-Secretary of State, or Assistant Under-Secretary of State from the Foreign Office and India Office.
The Director of Military Intelligence.

This sub-committee to be empowered to give decisions except on matters of high policy or of exceptional importance.

The War Office are in general accord with the above suggestions, and consider that (*b*) and (*c*) are of great importance.

With regard to suggestion (*a*) the War Office consider that the C.I.G.S. or his representative (normally the D.M.I.) should be a member of the Committee.

The inclusion of a representative of the Treasury on the sub-committee would be necessary.

3. The third part of the memorandum deals with the dual system of political control reigning in Persia. That this system has not stood the test of war is evident from the present situation in Persia, but whether it is the fault of the system or of the executive is open to discussion. It has been pointed out that the open transfer of Persia from Foreign Office to India Office control would give rise to great apprehension in Persia, where the politicians would at least pretend to regard it is a symbol of annexation. Certainly enemy propagandists would treat it as such. Nor can we only consider Persia herself and our enemies in this connection, but it is necessary to remember that both France and the United States are at present displaying a great and probably not wholly altruistic interest in the affairs of Persia, and the transfer of that country to the sphere of India Office control would be very ill-received by our Allies.

Further, although this is a matter in which the War Office are not directly concerned, it would appear that such a radical change would be most difficult to carry through under war conditions.

In view of the above, a change of instrument is recommended rather than a change of system. I do not wish to cast aspersions on the present Minister at Teheran, but at the same time I feel bound to endorse the views expressed in the Viceroy's telegram of the 9th July, appended to Mr. Montagu's memorandum, and to add that the general staff have long been of the opinion that the personality of the Minister of Teheran has been one of the most adverse factors with which we have had to contend in Persia.

In view of the great qualifications and experience of Sir P. Cox, and in order to obtain unity of political control, I would suggest that the functions of that officer should be extended, and that he should be put in charge of the Legation at Teheran

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as the servant of the Foreign Office, while retaining his position as Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia and Political Resident in the Persian Gulf.

4. The fourth point raised by Mr. Montagu deals with the control of military operations in Eastern theatres.

Two alternatives are suggested, and each is elaborated as shown below :—

(*a.*) The whole war area from Palestine eastwards to be managed from India by the Government of India.

Elaboration : Palestine and, perhaps, other theatres might be excluded from the Eastern area.

(*b.*) The establishment in London of a Middle-East War Department as a sub-department of the War Office to conduct the war in the East.

Elaboration : This Department should, perhaps, be set up not in London, but in Egypt, Baghdad, or further East (India).

With regard to proposal (*a*) the General Staff are of the opinion that in agreeing to the control by India of military operations and intelligence organisation in Turkestan, East Persia, and South-West Persia, they have decentralised their control as much as is safe and practicable.

It must be remembered:—

(i.) That the campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia are closely connected both with each other and with campaigns in Europe, and also that an enemy offensive in the East (which is the foundation of Mr. Montagu's paper) might be so directed as to render this connection even more intimate than at present.

(ii.) The forces operating in North-West Persia are based on, and form part of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, and must be controlled through the headquarters of the latter force.

(iii.) The situation in Turkestan is largely dependent on military developments in Russia and Siberia.

These considerations make it impossible to enlarge the sphere which has been allotted to the Indian Government for military control, while the fact mentioned in (iii) gives rise to the question of whether Turkestan should not be excluded from that sphere. It is, however, considered unnecessary to make any charge in this respect at present.

With regard to Mr. Montagu's second proposal, viz., the creation of a "Middle-East War Department," this has at first sight much to commend itself. The idea has, however, been previously considered by the General Staff and has not been found practicable. Unity of control over operations in all theatres of war is essential if the available man-power is to be correctly distributed. Similarly, it is essential that the co-ordination of all military intelligence should be centralised if the enemy's intentions are to be correctly gauged. The same argument points to the necessity for centralisation as regards the control of the administrative services. These considerations rule out the suggestion that the proposed branch War Department should be set up somewhere in the East and put a limit to the degree to which the suggestion could be advantageously developed, even in London. Another important consideration is that the setting up of a separate Eastern War Department would involve the employment of a considerable number of officers possessing knowledge of the political and military situation in the East, and suitable qualifications for the executive functions of such a department. These officers could not be found without denuding the staffs in the Eastern theatres.

As the war in the East develops it may, however, be necessary to make some changes within the existing organisation in the direction of the proposal put forward by Mr. Montagu. A suggestion, which is put forward with much diffidence as it trenches upon the interior organisation of the India Office, but which may be admissible as Mr. Montagu has raised it with the D.M.I., is that the existing functions of the Military Secretary at the India Office should be divided among two officers, the one dealing with General Staff questions alone and acting in these matters both as the deputy of the C.I.G.S. and as an official of the India Office, and the other dealing with all other matters now appertaining to the Military Secretary at the India Office.

(Signed) HENRY WILSON, *C.I.G.S.*

War Office, July 15, 1918.

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E.C.-978.

THE WAR IN THE EAST.

Departmental Note by the Foreign Office on Mr. Montagu's Paper of the 5th July, 1918, to which are appended Notes by the Secretary of State and Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

(Previous Papers E.C.-718 and E.C.-809.)

The following observations are the Departmental views of the Foreign Office on the memorandum by the Secretary of State for India of the 5th July :—

It is undoubtedly true that one of the defects of the constitution of the Eastern Committee is that action in important matters meets occasionally with some delay owing to the difficulty of calling the Committee together to decide on the questions submitted to them. It has been noticed that a considerable number of questions of secondary importance relating to the situation in the East which are now submitted to the Committee are capable of inter-departmental adjustment without recourse to the Committee, and it would seem that any modification of procedure to be introduced in dealing with matters of this character could best be made by withdrawing such questions from the control of the Committee and leaving them to be decided inter-departmentally as was formerly the case before this Committee was constituted. Questions of policy may be just as urgent as those requiring early executive action, but they are not nearly as frequent, and consequently the difficulty of calling the Committee quickly together will not be so often experienced. The Committee should, however, decide upon all questions of policy and should consider and advise the departments concerned as to the best means for carrying it out. Such a modification would be simple, would cause no confusion, and would add to the efficiency and rapidity of the action to be taken. It is practically another form of the sub-committee proposed by Mr. Montagu, but it would be less cumbersome, and would have the advantage of not compelling the presence of others than those who are directly and departmentally interested in the questions at issue.

Nevertheless it can hardly be denied that the Eastern Committee in its present form has proved a very useful branch of the War Cabinet. It has performed a considerable amount of substantial work under the able Chairman who presides at its meetings. It may have its imperfections—there are few bodies that have not—but it is doubtful whether the conduct of affairs now under the control of the Committee would either in the present or the future be improved by any material change in its present form of organisation. At this stage of the war any broad variation in the machinery of Government is to be deprecated as likely to cause confusion and delay, and it is doubtful whether any improvement would be obtained by a change.

Such a view applies equally to the executive problem as raised in the note which is now under review.

As regards Persia, Mr. Montagu points out with considerable reason and force that the system of dual control, which has worked comparatively well in the past, has been strained to breaking point by the circumstances of the war, but regarding the situation in its purely political aspect there is no reason for holding the opinion that undivided Indian control in Persia would produce better results. In fact it may be stated without contradiction that knowledge and experience gained in Persia is to be found far more easily in London than it is in Simla or Delhi. It should not be forgotten either that when the Persians professed to fear Imperialistic or annexationist designs on the part of Great Britain their eyes were turned to India rather than to London. The feeling in Persia against India and Indian officials is traditional, and were the whole of the policy in Persia to be conducted from Simla that feeling would undoubtedly become aggravated. Our present difficulties in Persia need not be ascribed so much to faults of system as of persons. We had to choose between a policy of conciliation which, in the existing world-military situation, might well have been considered as weakness by the Oriental mind, thus aggravating the position, and a "strong" policy. After deciding upon the latter we found that the Military Authorities were unable to supply the required forces in the required time in order to carry this policy into effect. Our policy will right

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itself if and when it is afforded an adequate military backing. In the opinion of the Foreign Office it is essential that political control in Persia should remain in London.

As regards the military and political control of the war areas from Palestine eastwards, this presumably includes the Hedjaz and Arabia where Arab forces are co-operating with General Allenby. To transfer the political control of this area to India would entail the bankruptcy of the Arab movement, to which we are committed. The Government of India is fundamentally anti-Arab and anti-Sherif, and subconsciously pro-Turkish. It would not be able to handle the Arab movement with sympathy, still less to manage our delicate relations with the French and Italians in Arabia and Palestine. To sever the Palestine and Hedjaz campaigns from Egypt would be a mistake. Both are dependent upon Egypt for supplies, railway material, labour, personnel, and advances in specie or notes, &c. The political control of this area should also remain in London.

Foreign Office, July 17, 1918.

With the general tone and intention of Mr. Montagu's paper I find myself in hearty agreement. I do think that there is room for improvement in the methods with which we have dealt in the past with Persia and the Middle East.

1. The Eastern Committee is an exceedingly valuable body. It is obvious that a number of questions must arise in connection with the areas with which it deals, which are properly speaking Cabinet questions; that is to say, either they raise large issues of policy, or they involve difference of opinion on important points between the departments concerned. The decision of such questions requires knowledge of a rather special kind, and necessarily consumes some time. For both reasons it would be highly inconvenient to refer them to the War Cabinet, and they are likely to receive more instructed attention from a body such as the Eastern Committee.

2. But for executive purposes the Eastern Committee is not a convenient instrument. It necessarily meets comparatively seldom, and even so is a great burden on the time of the very busy men who constitute the Committee.

I agree therefore with Mr. Montagu that executive matters should, as far as possible, be dealt with either by the individual departments immediately concerned or by informal consultations between two or more departments, and I trust that this system will be increasingly adopted in the future. In any important matter the Chairman of the Committee should be consulted just as the Prime Minister is, or ought to be, consulted in other departmental questions.

3. Further, I agree with Mr. Montagu that it would be desirable for the Foreign Office, and, as far as I can judge, for the War Office also, to create a special department for dealing with Middle Eastern affairs. Whether ultimately they should be put under the control of an entirely independent office or not may be left for future consideration, since we are all agreed it cannot be conveniently done during the war. But the lesser reform may be carried out at once. To a large extent it has already been done in the Foreign Office, and I should personally be glad to see the process carried further.

4. In my judgment, Mr. Montagu is right in thinking that it would be desirable to place the political interests of the whole of this district in one hand, but I entirely agree with the War Office that it would be impossible, without grave disadvantage, to entrust the political control to the India Office. Such a change would, I am convinced, be very much resented, not only in Persia, but in Egypt, Arabia, and Palestine also, and would besides involve very large changes in the existing system which it would not be convenient to make during the war. Whether it would be possible to transfer so much of political control as is now held by the India Office to the proposed Middle Eastern Department of the Foreign Office is a matter on which I am not in a position to express a decided opinion, but I think it ought to be considered.

5. As for the military side, I cannot think that Mr. Montagu's suggestion would work. I am confident that all important military operations in this war must be directed by the General Staff, and that whenever we have departed from that principle we have had reason to regret it. Unquestionably the Mesopotamia misfortunes would have been much less likely to occur if the control of the operations there had always been in London, and so long as the operations in Arabia, at Rabegh, &c., were

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in the hands of the Foreign Office the results were far from satisfactory. Indeed, so strongly do I feel this that I have considerable doubts whether it was wise to leave even Southern Persia under the military control of India. I am disposed to think that that decision will have to be reviewed before very long, unless, indeed, it ceases to be an area of military operations properly so called, as distinguished from the necessary policing of a disturbed district.

(Initialled) R. C.

Foreign Office, July 20, 1918.

The questions raised in this file belong to two different categories: the first relates to a question of high policy, the second to a question of machinery.

The question of policy essentially turns on whether our course in Persia and Mesopotamia should be steered from Simla or from London. There is no doubt something to be urged in favour of the first alternative; but I understand that Indian methods are popular neither in Persia nor among the Arabs, and this is, I think, conclusive. Whether the control of our policy in these regions shall be left to the Foreign Office or whether a new Office should be created in Downing Street to deal with them, is a problem which may be left alone till after the war.

As regards the Eastern Committee, I think its critics exaggerate its shortcomings. I do not love government by Committees, but Committees are inevitable where more than one Department is concerned in any group of transactions. Now in the regions with which the Eastern Committee concerns itself, the Foreign Office, the India Office, and the War Office are at the present moment all equally interested. All must be represented at every meeting, and at some meetings it is necessary to have a Treasury representative in addition. If it be remembered that, since this Committee largely takes the place of the Cabinet so far as the subjects with which it deals are concerned, and that therefore the Cabinet must be adequately represented upon it, I do not think that its constitution can be greatly improved.

It may be the fact, perhaps it is, that some of the items on its agenda are not sufficiently important to be dealt with by a body so constituted; but this evil, if it exists, could easily be remedied by empowering the Chairman to relegate such questions for provisional decision to a small Departmental Committee appropriately constituted.

A. J. B.

Foreign Office, July 27, 1918.

E.C.-1008.

"THE WAR IN THE EAST."

(Functions of the Eastern Committee.)

Memorandum by Lord Curzon.

(Previous Papers: G.T.-3834, G.T.-3905, G.T.-3978, G.T.-4940, G.T.-5084. War Cabinet 363, Minute 20; and War Cabinet 369, Minute 11.)

The important questions raised by Mr. Montagu in his Memorandum of the 5th July (E.C.-718/G.T.-5084) have now been reviewed by the War Office Memorandum of the 15th July (E.C.-809), by the Foreign Office Memorandum of the 17th July (E.C.-978), and in notes by Lord Robert Cecil of the 20th July (E.C.-978) and Mr. Balfour of the 27th July (E.C.-978), and these papers reveal a very considerable measure of agreement on the principal points that have been raised. As Chairman of the Committee, I should like to comment upon them.

1. Mr. Montagu proposes that the Committee should be reconstituted as a Committee of Ministers only, with expert advice and assistance available in the room. That is exactly what the Committee is. If reference be made to the note of the C.I.G.S. (G.T.-3834), and the War Cabinet discussion and decision upon it (War Cabinet 369/11), it will be seen that the Members of the Committee are:—

The Chairman.
General Smuts.
The Foreign Secretary.
The Indian Secretary.
C.I.G.S.

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The Foreign Secretary is accompanied by the Permanent Under-Secretary, and the Indian Secretary by his Political Secretary, the C.I.G.S. is sometimes accompanied by the D.M.I.—sometimes replaced by him. Sir M. Sykes, Mr. Oliphant, and Mr. Shuckburgh attend as Foreign Office and India Office auxiliaries to the War Cabinet Secretary (Colonel Storr). As we do not vote, but decide by discussion, no technical change in the position of those who attend the Committee seems to be required. Even if carried out, it would make no difference in the way in which our work is done.

2. Mr. Montagu lays it down as an accepted premise that action is delayed by the necessity of awaiting the decision of a Committee which cannot meet often, and the War Office think that this cannot be disputed, and that the Committee is overburdened with executive work. I take leave to dispute both propositions. The members of the Committee are, perhaps, not so well aware as the Chairman must be of the conditions under which it meets. Any member of the Committee is at liberty to ask for a meeting by communicating with the Secretary (who immediately consults the Chairman) on any day. No meeting has ever been refused. On many occasions I have suggested a meeting, only to be told that the Departments concerned did not require it. Ten days recently elapsed without a meeting, because the Departments, not the Chairman, deprecated it. I am not aware of any question of importance, the decision of which has been delayed by the procedure or constitution of the Committee. Some questions—as, for instance, the discussion of the present subject—have been delayed, not by the Committee, but by the slowness of the Departments in submitting their views.

3. Should action so prompt or immediate be required as to render even the slight delay involved in a meeting undesirable, the remedy is not only easy, but is frequently applied. On several occasions Lord Robert Cecil has sent off an urgent Foreign Office telegram—which he has kindly submitted to me as Chairman—without the delay even of an hour. The War Office has often done the same. The machinery in this respect is quite adequate for any emergency; and I think the Departments concerned may safely be trusted, in consultation with the Chairman, with the exercise of these powers. They are in accordance with the policy recommended by Lord Robert Cecil.

4. In practice the departmental devolution that is recommended in some of these papers already exists. The very fact that the Committee recently was not asked to meet for 10 days is in itself conclusive proof that departmental action was not suspended in the interim, but was going on all the while. Action is taken upon the great majority of the telegrams that come in both to Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office, without any reference to the Committee (or, I may add, to the Chairman) at all. The Departments have found no difficulty in discriminating between what I may call departmental cases and Committee cases. If there is a doubt the despatch of a telephone message or a red box can settle it in half an hour.

5. Neither does it appear to me necessary to draw a distinction between "high policy" and "executive action" in defining the functions of the Eastern Committee. The despatch of Dunsterville and an armed British force to Baku, the reinforcement of Bushire or Bunder Abbas, the despatch of emissaries to Bokhara or Tashkend, the steps to be taken with regard to the Idrisi or Ibn Saud, are all executive acts which could not possibly be dissociated from the Committee or left to other hands. If the Committee were confined to discussion of policy and were to be divorced from any control of action, I for one would not care to serve upon it any longer.

6. For similar reasons I see no reason for the constitution of a Sub-Committee, with powers either of decision or action. The proper depositories of these powers seem to me to be (*a*) the Committee, (*b*) the Departments, co-ordination between the two being maintained in the manner already described. If a Sub-Committee were set up it would constantly be confronted with the difficulty of deciding what was of primary and what was of secondary importance; time would be consumed in reporting its decisions to the main Committee; they might even be disapproved of by the latter. Recent cases in which the Eastern Committee declined to authorise action, which a Sub-Committee might, if it had existed, quite conceivably have been disposed to adopt, were the proposed despatch of a party of Dunsterville's officers and men to Bakhtiariland, Sykes' proposal to move northwards with troops and South Persia Rifles from Shiraz to Isfahan, the despatch of the Hejaz delegates to Central Asia. None of these proposals appeared at the moment to be matters either of high policy or of capital importance. The Eastern Committee, fortunately, and as events proved rightly, intervened in all these cases. Had the responsibility been delegated to others,

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and had a different decision been arrived at, the consequences, for which the Committee would have been held responsible, might have been far-reaching and unfortunate.

7. As a matter of fact, viewing the complexity of the problems concerned, and the fact that five departmental or governing bodies, viz., War Cabinet, Foreign Office, India Office, Government of India, War Office, with their various diplomatic, military, and political agents, are involved, out of which medley of opinion and advice a single coherent policy has to be evolved, it seems to me that the Eastern Committee, now that it has settled down to its work, does it with the minimum of friction, and on the whole very reasonably well.

8. If I were to dilate upon what in my opinion is really its weakest point, I should have to say more than I care about the position of the Chairman. Whereas his colleagues of the Foreign Office, India Office, and War Office come to the meetings well posted in all that is passing, with the resources of highly efficient Departments at their backs, with memoranda prepared for them by capable subordinates, and with the advantage of having talked over matters in advance, the Chairman enjoys no such advantages. He has no Department, no Secretariat, no Staff. In so far as he forms an opinion upon the papers or telegrams that come in before a meeting he has to form it alone. He takes the chair without any idea what the Departments concerned may have in their minds or be about to propose.

This is an exceedingly difficult task, and I have never concealed my view that if such a Committee as the Eastern Committee is to survive the war, or even if the area which it supervises is to remain a main theatre of British and Indian political and military action, a Secretary of State for the Middle East will be required, with the full resources and personnel of a Department behind him, and with authority over his own men.

But I do not raise that issue now, because we are dealing with a temporary and critical emergency, which we have to meet with such devices as we can, and because radical reconstruction is for the moment out of the question. When the war is over the experience of the Eastern Committee may be of considerable value in guiding the then Government to a more comprehensive and permanent solution.

9. Whether there should be Middle East Departments of the Foreign Office and War Office is a matter which may safely be left to them to decide.

10. The proposal to hand over to the Indian Government full political and military control of the countries lying to the east of Palestine, or indeed of any portion of them, other than the areas already assigned or transferred, has been so adversely criticised from every quarter that it is unnecessary to pursue the argument. Whether we regard the feelings of the peoples and Governments concerned, the attitude of our Allies, or the effect on public opinion in general, it cannot, I think, be doubted that any such change of policy would be a source both of weakness and of misunderstanding. Probably no Viceroy of India in modern times has taken a more active interest in the affairs of Persia and contiguous countries than myself. But if I had been asked, when in India, to assume political control at Teheran, I would have preferred to be excused on the ground that the Eye of Persia still looks West rather than East, and that her politics are not Indian but international.

The division between the spheres of the Foreign Office and the Government of India is no doubt to some extent arbitrary and illogical, and when we get a Middle East Department and Secretary of State it will in any case be modified, and will perhaps disappear. But meanwhile we must get along with a not unworkable compromise. It is no doubt disagreeable for the Government of India to be, so to speak, yoked with a colleague at Teheran who is pursuing a not necessarily identical policy, and who takes his orders from London. But it would be not only disagreeable but dangerous to have a Minister at Teheran who might be pursuing a policy inspired or dictated from Delhi, that did not fit in with the foreign policy of Downing Street.

Generally, I concur in Mr. Balfour's view that we are not dealing unsuccessfully with a complex situation, and that for the present no substantial changes are required.

(Initialled.) C. of K.

August 1, 1918.

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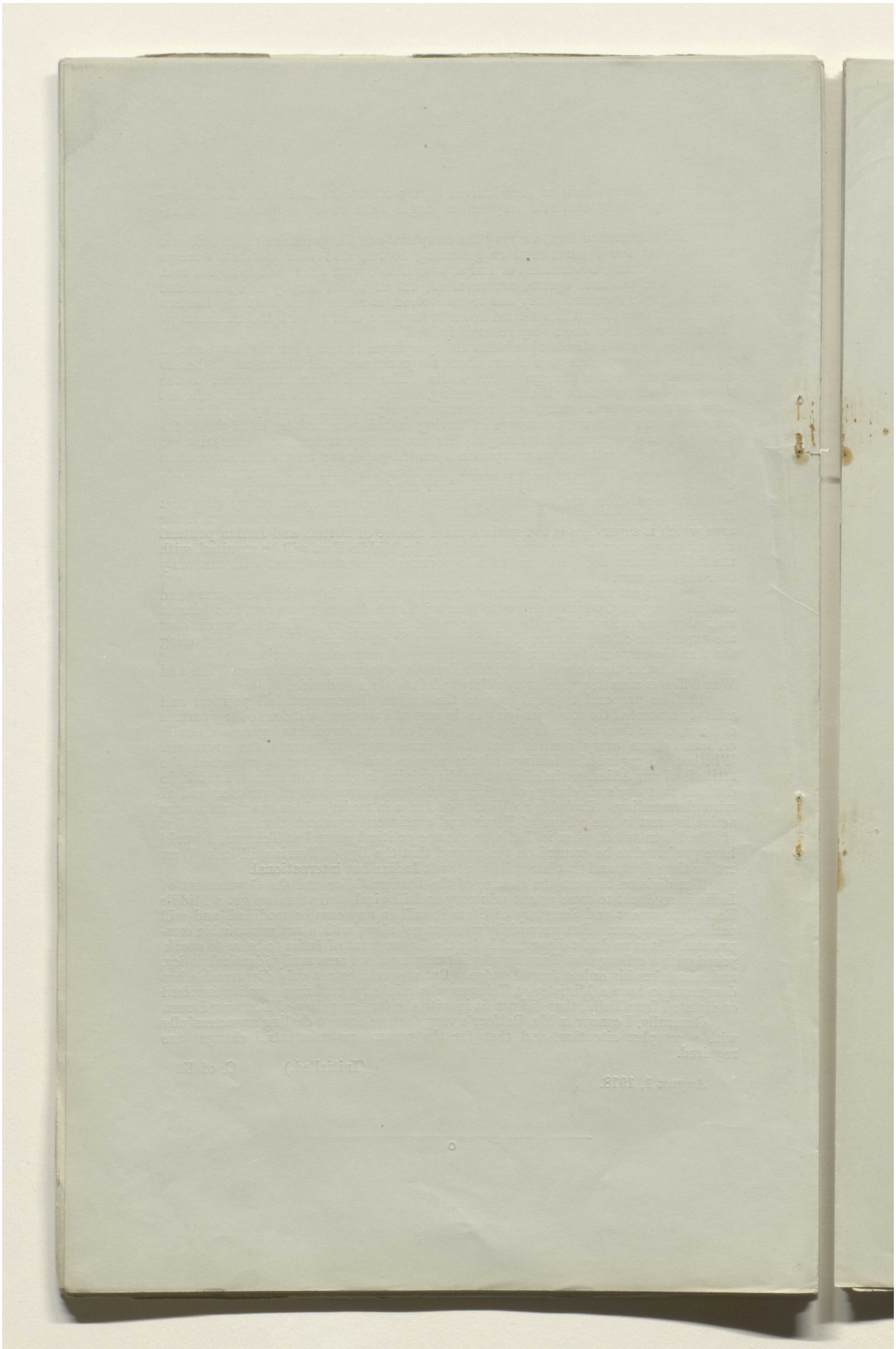

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Lord Curzon

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E.C. 25th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, August 14, 1918, at 11 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B. (representing the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P. Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G. (representing the Director of Military Intelligence).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Baku and Krasnovodsk.

1. The Committee resumed the discussion, adjourned from their previous meeting (E.C. 24th Meeting, Minute 2), on the situation at Baku, the Caspian, and Krasnovodsk.

General Wilson said that he had, since the last meeting, prepared the drafts of two telegrams which he wished to submit for the approval of the Committee.

After some discussion, in the course of which various amendments were suggested in the two drafts, the Committee—

Authorised the War Office to despatch the telegrams in their finally approved form (E.C. 1166, (Appendix I).

The King of the Hejaz and Ibn Saud.

2. The Chairman referred to a telegram, No. 1209, dated the 12th August, from Sir R. Wingate (E.C. 1154) (Appendix II), giving the latter's views on the situation, which, it had been suggested, might be relieved by diverting Ibn Saud's attention from the Hejaz and directing it towards Ibn Rashid.

A brief discussion followed, in the course of which Lord Robert Cecil suggested that the matter was one which might be left to the Chairman and himself to settle.

The Chairman thought that the Secretary of State for India should also be present, if the Committee agreed to leave the matter in their hands.

The Committee accepted Lord Robert Cecil's proposal as amended by the Chairman.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.*,
August 14, 1918.

[365—24]

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APPENDIX I.

E.C.–1166.

War Office to C.-in-C., India.—(Repeated to G.O.C., Mesopotamia.)

War Office, August 14, 1918.

64309 Cipher. D.M.O.

1. With regard to India's 63088 of the 10th August, it is not desirable that the War Office should lay down in detail the policy for Malleson as the situation is kaleidoscopic in its nature and is none too clear. Moreover, India has direct control of Malleson's mission. It may, however, be convenient to summarise our objectives and directions of activity in Trans-Caspia and on the Caspian. The three principal objectives are as follows :—

(*a.*) To control Caspian shipping.
(*b.*) To occupy Baku, for as long as there is any hope of holding it.
(*c.*) To occupy Krasnovodsk permanently.

2. We have so often emphasised the importance of our gaining control of the Caspian fleet, and destroying what we cannot control that we will not dwell on it again.

3. The object of occupying Baku is, in the first place, to accomplish (*a*), and secondly, if it is impossible to effect a continued occupation, to render the oil-fields and port useless for many months to the enemy. So soon as this is complete, and unless the situation at Astrakhan develops so much in our favour as to justify hopes of early co-operation, we should no longer attempt to defend Baku against superior forces, but should transfer to Krasnovodsk our detachment there, together with any local forces, including possibly Bicharakoff, which will hereafter be useful to us.

Having this consideration in view, G.O.C., Mesopotamia, is doubtless securing the necessary shipping for use at the opportune moment. It is quite likely, however, that the activities of Alexieff north of the Caucasus may re-act favourably on the situation at Baku, and enable us to maintain our hold there.

4. Guns are the main consideration at Krasnovodsk. These can be most rapidly obtained from Marshall, who should at once take this matter in hand. Our occupation of Krasnovodsk will be maintained, and every effort should be made by Mesopotamia and Malleson to build up a force there and arrange a satisfactory seaward defence. It is as yet too early to say what should be the strength of this garrison. When guns become available perhaps some of the shipping now held for Malleson at Krasnovodsk might go to Enzeli to fetch them.

5. We have full confidence that both Malleson and Mesopotamia realise the urgency of achieving above objectives, and that they are doing their utmost to meet this difficult and obscure situation in Central Asia.

6. Though the Caspian Littoral falls under Mesopotamia's control, and Trans-Caspian under India's, we wish at the same time to lay stress on the point that such limits should not hinder any necessary action which should and must be taken by either party outside his sphere. It seems a case where the man on the spot must be trusted, and where, in order to gain our objectives energetic and rapid action without reference to either India or the War Office must frequently be taken.

(Clear the Line.)

War Office to G.O.C., Mesopotamia (Repeated C.-in-C., India.)

64310 cipher. D.M.O. *War Office, August* 14, 1918.

YOUR X. 112 of the 12th August.

We agree with your proposal generally and cannot at this distance do more than outline general policy, for which see my immediately preceding telegram. However, the following replies are given to questions raised by you :—

1. If situation permits there is no objection to force up to three battalions and a battery going to Baku, and with such force it is hoped, should evacuation become imperative, destruction of oil resources will be carried out by force, if necessary.

2. We sanction the despatch of up to one battalion infantry to Krasnovodsk, but in view of possibility of hostile transports entering port from Astrakhan, guns are all

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important, and you should therefore send at least a section even should they take only equipment ammunition. With such a small force at Krasnovodsk surely local supplies can be purchased, but doubtless India will ask Malleson to persuade Trans-Caspian authorities to assist in every way. It would be too much to expect Malleson to undertake responsibility for full supply of the force at present.

3. Crude oil is obtainable in sufficient quantities from Cheleken Island near Krasnovodsk, but we are cabling fuller detail separately.

4. Your X. 1103 of the 12th August.

In view of our success at Kazian in removing Bolshevik influence, doubtless you will instruct Dunsterville not to hesitate to dispose similarly of any remaining Bolshevik influence at Baku, if advisable. He will have our full support in this.

5. We cannot help feeling from Dunsterville's telegrams that possible failure is uppermost in his mind. He should be removed if he lacks the necessary determination to see this difficult situation through, but it may be that he only requires encouragement, and in any action you think fit to take you will have our support.

Addressed Mesopotamia; repeated India.

APPENDIX II.

E.C.–1154.

Sir R. Wingate to Mr. Balfour.—(*Received August* 12.)

(No. 1209.)
(Telegraphic.) *Cairo, August* 12, 1918.

BAGDAD telegram No. 6491 and preceding telegrams.
Following is my view of situation:—

Khurma affair as between King Hussein and Bin Saud is a manifestation of ancient antipathy between Meccans and Wahabites. Both principalities are pledged to us, but former is actively fighting Turks. Each desire to force a favourable issue that will enable him to establish his position against the other. Bin Saud's influence is largely based on Wahabism, sect which (more especially in disturbed times like the present) can combine reactionary and tortuous [?] fanatical [*sic*] elements, and become unmanageable and dangerous.

King Hussein is keenly alive to this potential menace, and probably feels that with our support Bin Saud and his sect might dominate Arabian politics. It will be conceded, I trust, that such a consummation of Arab movement would be unsatisfactory to Moslems generally and contrary to British interests and propaganda. On the other hand, policy advocated from Cairo would be directed to secure priority of King Hussein without prejudice to territoriel rights of other Arabian chiefs. King Hussein represents his action at Khurma as necessary to indicate his impaired authority in the East, and disclaims any aggressive designs on Bin Saud. I consider we must accept these assurances and uphold his right to punish a rebel Sheikh (Khaled) originally appointed by him. Mr. Philby's ready acquiescence in Bin Saud's assertion that King's action is aggressive is, from my point of view, most regrettable and ill-advised. Hitherto Mecca has depended for protection on Ottoman (Egyptian or Turkish) military support. We have now, temporarily at any rate, replaced Ottomans, and should endeavour to maintain and strengthen influence of our foremost protégé and staunchest anti-Turkish unit in Arabia.

At the same time I fully appreciate necessity of returning friendship of Bin Saud, whom I understand represents strongest, if not only, Anglophil element in Nejdean politics. Wahabism, in less honest and capable hands than his, might be easily converted from a potential into an active menace. I agree that Bin Saud should be treated liberally in the matter of funds, which may also exercise a pacifying influence on hostile public opinion, referred to by Mr. Philby; but I would urge that other sinews of war should not be supplied by us unless absolutely necessary, and then in minimum quantities requisite, to retain his personal good-will and authority.

If His Majesty's Government accept the views, I suggest written communication to Bin Saud, referred to in paragraph 1 of Bagdad telegram No. 6491, should be in following sense:—

That we hold firmly to our treaty of December 1915 with him, and desire to prevent by every means open to us aggression against his [? territory], precise limits of which as implied in article 1 cannot at present be known.

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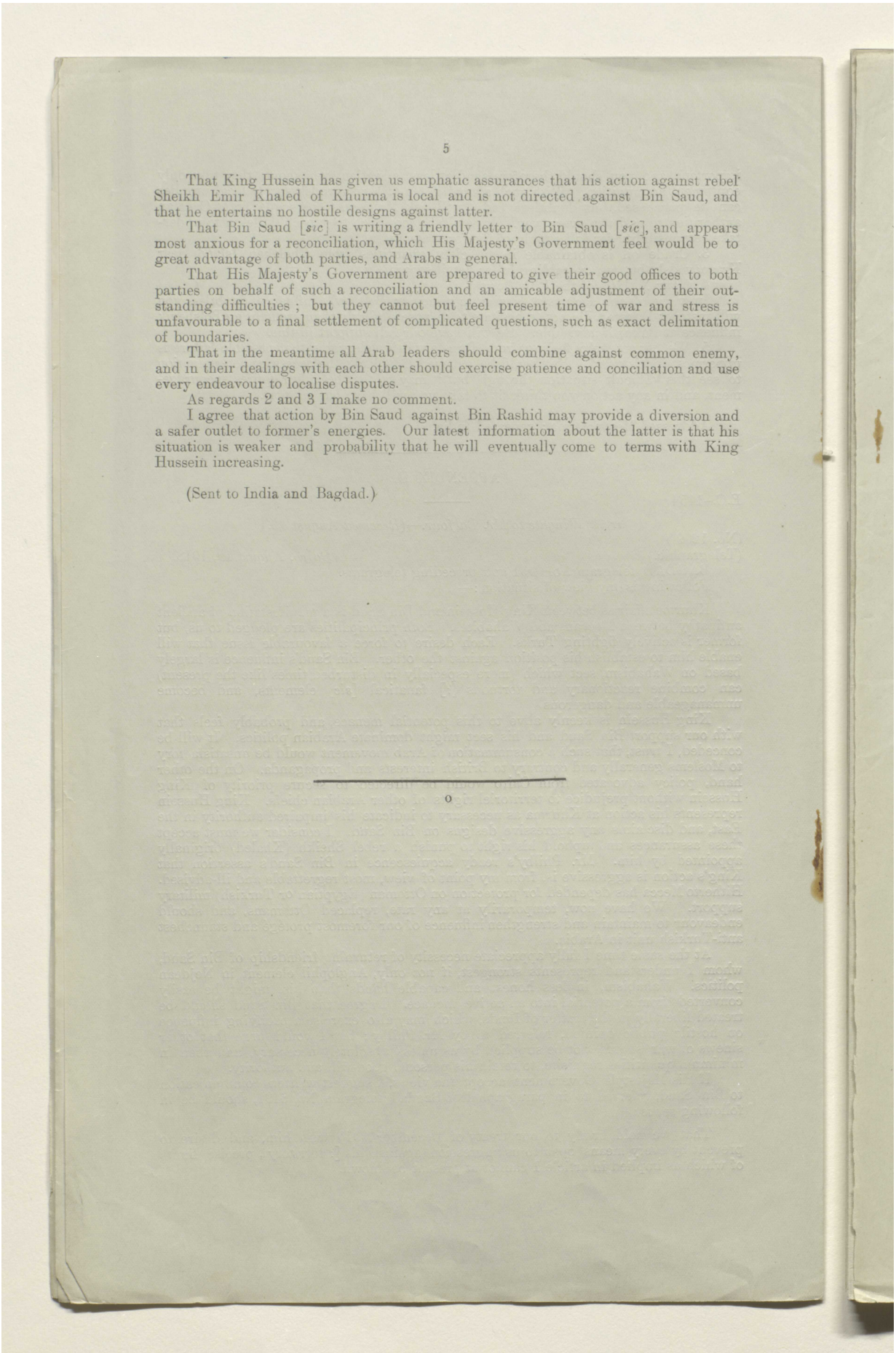

That King Hussein has given us emphatic assurances that his action against rebel Sheikh Emir Khaled of Khurma is local and is not directed against Bin Saud, and that he entertains no hostile designs against latter.

That Bin Saud [*sic*] is writing a friendly letter to Bin Saud [*sic*], and appears most anxious for a reconciliation, which His Majesty's Government feel would be to great advantage of both parties, and Arabs in general.

That His Majesty's Government are prepared to give their good offices to both parties on behalf of such a reconciliation and an amicable adjustment of their outstanding difficulties; but they cannot but feel present time of war and stress is unfavourable to a final settlement of complicated questions, such as exact delimitation of boundaries.

That in the meantime all Arab leaders should combine against common enemy, and in their dealings with each other should exercise patience and conciliation and use every endeavour to localise disputes.

As regards 2 and 3 I make no comment.

I agree that action by Bin Saud against Bin Rashid may provide a diversion and a safer outlet to former's energies. Our latest information about the latter is that his situation is weaker and probability that he will eventually come to terms with King Hussein increasing.

(Sent to India and Bagdad.)

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E.C. 26th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, August 15, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B. (representing the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

The following also attended:

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I. (Military Secretary, India Office).

Saud.

1. The following telegrams came under discussion: Bagdad, Nos. 6489, 6490, 6491, 6492, and 6500 (E.C. 1118, 1119, 1139, 1095, and 1096 respectively) and Cairo Nos. 1205 and 1209 (E.C. 1132 and E.C. 1154).

Mr. Montagu read to the Committee a Minute prepared at the India Office explaining the general situation.

After some discussion the Committee decided:—

That Mr. Philby should be instructed to address a communication to Bin Saud on the lines proposed in Cairo telegram No. 1209 (*E.C.* 1154), *subject to the following modifications:—*

(1.) The following to be substituted for the first paragraph of Sir R. Wingate's formula:—

"We recognise our obligations to use every influence in our power to prevent encroachments upon Bin Saud's territories, but feel that it is impossible to decide upon merits of individual cases until precise limits of his territories have been discussed and laid down as provided for in the Treaty."

(2.) At the end of the third paragraph of the formula add the words:—

"King Hussein has offered to visit Bin Saud himself with a view to discussing such reconciliation."

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It was also decided:

To accept Sir R. Wingate's views as to the provisions of "sinews of war" to Bin Saud.

The India Office and the Foreign Office were instructed to despatch the necessary telegrams.

Quetta–Nushki–Mirjawa Railway: Proposed Extension.

2. The Secretary of State for India raised the question of the proposed extension of the Quetta–Nushki–Mirjawa Railway, but it was decided:

To postpone discussion until representatives of the General Staff could be present.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
August 15, 1918.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

***Minutes** of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, August 20, 1918, at 3 P.M.*

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B. (representing the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P. Secretary of State for India.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

The following also attended:

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B. (for Minute 1).

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B. (for Minutes 1 and 2).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Temporary Deputy Secretary*).

Baku.

1. The Chairman said that the present situation at Baku was still indeterminate. The latest telegrams from Dunsterville, who was due to arrive there on the 18th instant, had been rather more reassuring. General Marshall wished to keep Dunsterville for diplomatic purposes, but, should events take a serious military turn, he proposed to appoint another military commander.

General Macdonogh said that a telegram had been received from the Commander-in-Chief in India proposing that the operations of Dunsterville and Malleson should be co-ordinated by placing them both under one commander. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff favoured the proposal, but wished to give it further consideration before final decision. His idea was that a Corps Commander should be detailed by General Marshall for the purpose.

General Smuts said that he was glad that this proposal, which meant that everything except the Seistan Cordon would be under General Marshall, had originated in India. He thought the suggestion a sound one.

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Mr. Montagu asked whether the co-ordination of Malleson's and Dunsterville's activities necessarily involved a single commander. He himself failed to see how General Marshall from Baghdad could possibly deal conveniently and promptly with such situations as might arise in Trans-Caspia.

The Chairman said he was rather inclined to agree with Mr. Montagu.

General Macdonogh pointed out that events in Trans-Caspia reacted very swiftly on Krasnovodsk and across the Caspian, and for this reason, among others, it was desirable to have a single command.

(The discussion was adjourned until the next meeting.)

The Chairman referred to a telegram from the G.O.C., Mesopotamia, No. X, 1351, 19th August (E.C.–1245), which he had received just before the meeting, saying that it was reported by Dunsterville that on the 16th instant there had been no change in the situation at Baku; that Bicharakov was apparently at Derbend, whence he had telegraphed to Dunsterville that the Turks had occupied Kizil Burun; that the Bolsheviks were sending troops from Astrakhan to Baku to re-establish their rule; that the Bolsheviks had attacked Bicharakov at Derbend, but had been driven off; that half the Derbend garrison had joined Bicharakov and the remainder had withdrawn to Petrovsk; and that Bicharakov himself proposed to occupy Petrovsk, with a view to getting in touch with North Caucasus and obtaining reinforcements to relieve Baku. Another development had come from the direction of Mughan, where there was a Russian colony capable of providing 4,500 men trained to arms and 10 guns, from whom Dunsterville thought that 3,000 good fighting men might be available.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he had been informed by M. Gennadius that a good Greek division, under Russian officers of Greek extraction, was somewhere in the Caucasus, but he did not know where. It was unfortunate that we could get no reliable news at all about the movements of that most important factor, the Caspian fleet.

General Smuts said that he gathered that one of the gunboats had sided with us and pushed back the rest of the fleet, while the other gunboat remained neutral.

Admiral Hope said the only information the Admiralty had about the gun-boats was that one of them was neutral. A few days previously, Commodore Norris had telegraphed that the first party of twenty-eight officers and men, with one 4-inch gun and two 12-pounders, was due at Enzeli the following day; that the Russian Caspian fleet was working with us and was transporting troops in Russian Government vessels; that hasty action in seizing ships would certainly result in the removal of all trooping facilities which he could not replace at present; and that ships would be taken over when his men and guns were up and the situation was favourable. Commodore Norris said that he fully understood the need of controlling the Caspian and only awaited the means to do so. Seaplanes capable of raiding Baku from Enzeli, also for coast flights, would be most valuable and were preferable to aeroplanes. On the 19th instant, Commodore Norris had sent a further message to the effect that the first naval party of twenty-eight officers and men with three guns arrived at Enzeli on the 14th August. The situation as regards the Caspian fleet appeared to be unchanged and the Commodore was leaving himself on the 16th instant for Baku. Admiral Hope, proceeding, said that another party of 108 naval officers and ratings with guns were somewhere on the road moving north, but whether they were nearer Basra or Enzeli he could not say. He was instructing Commodore Norris to keep him supplied with full and frequent information about the fleet.

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General Macdonogh said that instructions had been sent to discover the whereabouts of the Greek division and to divert it, when found, to the defence of Baku. Rather disquieting information had been received that seventeen German aeroplanes had been landed at Poti, which meant that they were going to Baku. The Air Service had been informed and had been requested to supplement the numbers of our own planes in Persia and Mesopotamia. Apparently, the Germans and Turks had managed to compose their difficulties in regard to Baku, whither some German Staff officers were proceeding in order to take over the control of the oil-fields.

Mr. Montagu thought that the Admiralty were proceeding on the favourable assumption that we should be able to get hold of the fleet; if, on the other hand, it got into German hands, we ought to have in the Caspian Sea submarine chasers or some special vessels which could operate in shallow waters. He thought that our naval designers should be set to work at once to invent some special craft to meet the particular conditions of the Caspian.

Admiral Hope undertook on behalf of the Admiralty to see what could be done and to report in due course to the Committee. He thought that the main difficulty in getting any vessels built in sections up to Enzeli lay in the bad roads and frequent sharp turnings. Moreover, the maximum load that could be taken on our lorries was 3 tons. A carrier with seaplanes was now on its way to Port Saïd, and these might be sent up to the Gulf. The Admiralty, unfortunately, had no charts of the Caspian, which was liable to violent storms.

The Committee requested Admiral Hope to send regularly to the Secretary, for the information of the Committee, copies of any telegrams he might receive containing information in regard to the Caspian fleet, &c., which might be useful to the Committee, and to investigate and report on the possibilities of constructing special vessels suitable for naval operations in the Caspian Sea.

(Admiral Hope withdrew.)

Leakage of Information.

The Chairman said that on the previous Friday he had drawn the attention of the War Cabinet to a communiqué which had appeared that morning in the press, giving a full account of our movements at Baku and Krasnovodsk, in Trans-Caspia and in Russian Turkestan. It had always been understood that the Proceedings of the Eastern Committee were to be regarded as most secret, and especially this recent extension of our front, and the Committee had been particularly anxious that nothing should leak out about our effort at Krasnovodsk. Our operations on both shores of the Caspian involved a very considerable, if legitimate, element of risk, and failure or disaster, either of which was quite possible, would be all the worse because of a premature divulgation of our aims. It might be true that we could not altogether conceal such movements from our enemies, but it was highly desirable that some of our friends should not get wind of them, *e.g.* the Amir of Afghanistan, who was always alarmed about any movement of troops in Central Asia. "The Times" had further commented on the fact that we had now a Persian Government favourable to us, a statement which could not fail to be embarrassing to Vossugh, whose position was not too strong. The Cabinet had directed the Director of Military Operations to enquire into the circumstances and submit an explanation. This had now been received, but it could not be regarded as satisfactory.

General Macdonogh said that the Staff Officer at the War Office deputed to give lectures on current military affairs almost invariably consulted him before being interviewed by the press. On

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this occasion, however, he had not done so. General Macdonogh said he had taken steps to prevent a recurrence of what was a most serious lapse.

The Committee agreed—

That the publication of our movements in Central Asia was most unfortunate, and that every precaution should be taken to prevent such disclosures in the future.

The Committee decided—

That the explanation of the Director of Military Operations, as submitted to the War Cabinet, should be placed among the Committee's papers, and that a record of the discussion should appear in the Minutes of the Committee.

Relief of Refugees from Bijar.

2. The Committee had before them telegrams 707 and 709 from Teheran (E.C.–1234 and E.C.–1225), in which it was stated that the Jelus were retreating before the Turks, and were coming to Hamadan, and that 40,000 Assyrian refugees had already passed through Bijar, where it was assumed that the total number would amount to 80,000. Our consul at Hamadan proposed to form a Relief Committee to deal with the situation, and had suggested that the last 20,000*l.* granted for famine relief, which had not been drawn upon, should be immediately diverted for this purpose. The consul further said he could not yet estimate what monthly grant would be required for relief, but thought it would be considerable, and suggested that His Majesty's Government and the United States Government should arrange a joint relief.

The Chairman thought that this presented an admirable opportunity for making use of the funds of which Mr. Judson's party could dispose, and he suggested that the United States should be asked to take over all relief measures.

Mr. Keynes said that his department approved of the diversion of the 20,000*l.* Mr. Judson's party had at their disposal sums amounting to 2 million pounds sterling. He had arranged with Mr. Wertheim that the question of the exchange should be left in our hands, and that half-a-million pounds sterling should be at his immediate disposal to start with. Mr. Keynes then read a draft reply he had prepared to the second of the above telegrams.

General Macdonogh said that from a military point of view it was desirable to get the refugees off the Hamadan–Kasvin road as soon as possible. The War Office were in favour of sending them down to Hillah, south of Baghdad, where there was an abundance of supplies. He thought that while some of the able-bodied men among them might be employed on road repair and for transport purposes, others might be made into soldiers. Even if Mr. Judson were able to provide the funds, the supplies to feed these refugees would have to be found on the spot, and we needed all local supplies to meet our own requirements.

The Committee agreed—

That Mr. Judson should be invited, as soon as possible, to take over all relief measures for the refugees, and directed—

(a.) *That the Treasury, in consultation with the Foreign Office, should revise Mr. Keyne's draft in the light of the above discussion before despatch to Teheran.*

(b.) *The War Office to ascertain the views of General Marshall in regard to the proposal to divert the refugees to Hillah.*

(Mr. Keynes then withdrew.)

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Trans-Caspia and Russian Turkestan.

3. The Chairman read the most recent telegrams, from which it appeared that the Trans-Caspian and Turkoman forces had been compelled to fall back from Merv toward the Persian frontier, and it might be that they would have to retire first on Askabad, then Kizil Arvat, and, finally, Krasnovodsk.

General Macdonogh thought that the situation in Trans-Caspia was grave, and owing to the enormous difficulty of getting reinforcements either to or from Meshed, the only way of dealing with the problem satisfactorily would be to secure the active intervention of the Amir of Afghanistan, in alliance with the Amir of Bokhara.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that this had already been suggested to the Government of India, who had been emphatic in their views that no active intervention could be expected or asked from the Amir of Afghanistan, whose policy was purely defensive against both sides. Even if he were willing to intervene on our side, such a step might probably cost him his throne.

General Cox stated that the only means of getting further reinforcements into Trans-Caspia depended on the immediate extension of the Mirjawa railway in the direction of Meshed.

The Committee decided—

That the situation might be represented to the Government of India, but that it was undesirable to suggest from here the application of any pressure to the Amir of Afghanistan.

The Mirjawa Railway.

The Committee had before them E.C.–1219.

The Chairman asked whether there was now any change in the view which the General Staff had held for some years, namely, that it was undesirable from the point of view of the ultimate defence of India to lessen the gap which separated the Trans-Caspian and Baluchistan railway systems.

General Macdonogh replied that, in view of the changed conditions now apparent, the General Staff would be willing to agree to the extension of the Mirjawa railway for 90 miles, any further extension beyond this distance to be reconsidered on the completion of the 90 miles.

Lord Robert Cecil asked whether, in view of the limited amount of railway material available, the extension of the Mirjawa railway was more vital than any alternative construction such as that from Mesopotamia towards Hamadan.

Mr. Montagu was of opinion that the situation in North-West Persia would probably develop in the near future, while the Trans-Caspian situation would be perpetuated for a far longer period, and therefore the strengthening of communications along the East Persion cordon appeared the more important.

General Macdonogh stated that the General Staff took the view that the situation in North-West Persia would either develop in the next two or three months or not until next spring, and in either event, if the Hamadan road was to be held, railway construction in support of our troops on that road must be undertaken. There were three alternative schemes now under consideration by the General Staff and Sir Sam Fay. With regard to the defence of India the General Staff had always taken the view that the best place to defend India was on the North-West Frontier and not in Trans-Caspia or Persia.

General Cox read a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India urging the importance of not abandoning any possible means of resisting enemy advances on the Caspian or through Persia or Trans-Caspia. There were sufficient rails for the proposed Mirjawa extension and the Mesopotamia extension and for replenishing the Chaman reserve.

The Chairman had no doubt that the first extension for 90 miles ought to be granted, the more so as the Government of India had already provided for it—in addition to the Hamadan extension—in

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their construction programme, which showed that they had the material.

The Committee decided—

That the proposed extension of the Mirjawa railway in the direction of Neh be approved for a distance of 90 miles; any further extension beyond 90 miles to be brought up for consideration when the 90 miles were approaching completion.

Samarra Art Treasures.

4. Mr. Montagu drew the attention of the Committee to a letter (E.C.–1144) he had received from the War Office dated the 27th June, 1918, regarding the disposal of the Samarra art treasures. This letter claimed for the War Office the final right to dispose of these treasures. He raised the matter on the constitutional point as well as on the merits of the case.

The Chairman stated that the War Office view could not, in his view, possibly be maintained. It was most desirable that these treasures should remain in Mesopotamia, at any rate until a report had been received upon them from Sir John Marshall. In so far as they had been inspected, they appeared to consist, not of Assyrian bricks, tablets, tiles, or inscriptions, such as might appropriately find a place in the British Museum, but of glass, pottery, &c., of the mid-Arabian period, which should properly be reserved for a museum at Baghdad, if such was ever created.

This view was shared by the Committee, and they decided—

To represent to the War Office that the decision of that department contained in their letter dated the 27th June was overruled.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
August 20, 1918.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. *September* 1918.

SECRET. 4

E.C. 28th Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, August 20, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P. Secretary of State for India.

Lieutenant-General Sir H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR R. GRAHAM, K.C.M.G., C.B. (representing the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Also present:

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B. (for Minute 1).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Temporary Deputy Secretary*).

Trans-Caspia: Financing of the Mensheviks.

1. The Committee had before them various telegrams, including one from the Viceroy of the 17th August (E.C.–1255), forwarding a message from General Malleson, which stated that in view of the necessity for supporting the present Trans-Caspian Government, he hoped that the principle of granting it financial aid might be recognised. The telegram further stated that the Indian Government were in favour of giving the required guarantee.

The Committee believed that the case was covered by existing orders, and decided—

That it should be disposed of departmentally.

(*Mr. Keynes withdrew*)

Baku and Trans-Caspia: Co-ordination of Operations of Malleson and Dunsterville.

2. The Committee resumed the discussion, adjourned from the 27th Meeting (Minute 1) regarding the unification of control of the operations of Generals Dunsterville and Malleson respectively.

The Chairman read the following telegram from General Monro to Sir H. Wilson, dated the 20th August (E.C.–1266), copies of which had been received by the Secretary too late to be circulated before the meeting:—

"Dealing with reunion of East as a whole, a telegram is now under consideration, but before despatch will have to be seen by the Government of India. Meanwhile, reference G.O.C., Mesopotamia's telegram No. X.1121, 12th August, it is becoming increasingly evident that control and one authority on the spot are required urgently in relation to present and prospective situation in North-Western Persia, the Caucasus,

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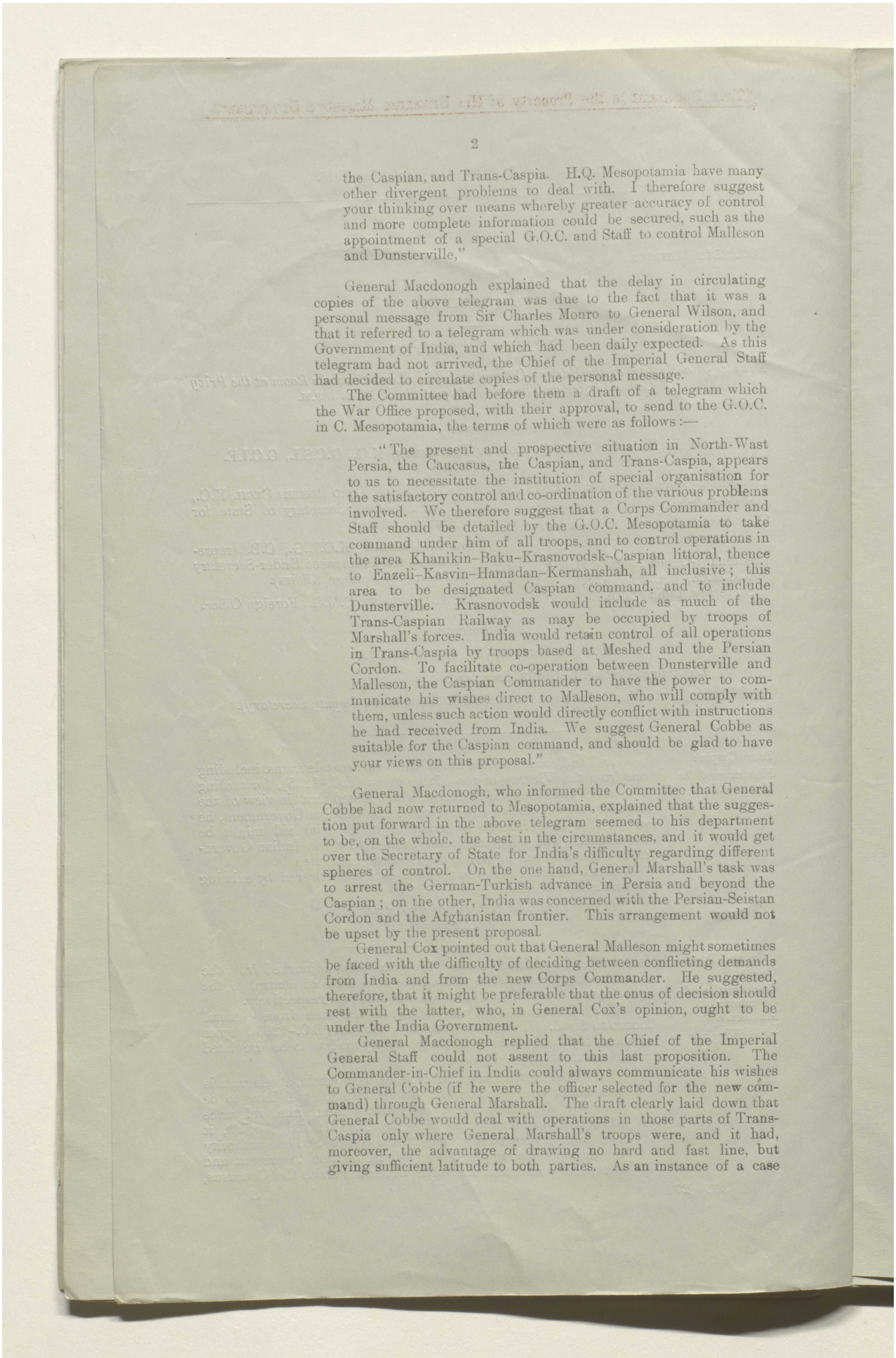

the Caspian, and Trans-Caspia. H.Q. Mesopotamia have many other divergent problems to deal with. I therefore suggest your thinking over means whereby greater accuracy of control and more complete information could be secured, such as the appointment of a special G.O.C. and Staff to control Malleson and Dunsterville,"

General Macdonogh explained that the delay in circulating copies of the above telegram was due to the fact that it was a personal message from Sir Charles Monro to General Wilson, and that it referred to a telegram which was under consideration by the Government of India, and which had been daily expected. As this telegram had not arrived, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had decided to circulate copies of the personal message.

The Committee had before them a draft of a telegram which the War Office proposed, with their approval, to send to the G.O.C. in C. Mesopotamia, the terms of which were as follows :—

"The present and prospective situation in North-West Persia, the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Trans-Caspia, appears to us to necessitate the institution of special organisation for the satisfactory control and co-ordination of the various problems involved. We therefore suggest that a Corps Commander and Staff should be detailed by the G.O.C. Mesopotamia to take command under him of all troops, and to control operations in the area Khanikin–Baku–Krasnovodsk–Caspian littoral, thence to Enzeli–Kasvin–Hamadan–Kermanshah, all inclusive; this area to be designated Caspian command, and to include Dunsterville. Krasnovodsk would include as much of the Trans-Caspian Railway as may be occupied by troops of Marshall's forces. India would retain control of all operations in Trans-Caspia by troops based at Meshed and the Persian Cordon. To facilitate co-operation between Dunsterville and Malleson, the Caspian Commander to have the power to communicate his wishes direct to Malleson, who will comply with them, unless such action would directly conflict with instructions he had received from India. We suggest General Cobbe as suitable for the Caspian command, and should be glad to have your views on this proposal."

General Macdonogh, who informed the Committee that General Cobbe had now returned to Mesopotamia, explained that the suggestion put forward in the above telegram seemed to his department to be, on the whole, the best in the circumstances, and it would get over the Secretary of State for India's difficulty regarding different spheres of control. On the one hand, General Marshall's task was to arrest the German-Turkish advance in Persia and beyond the Caspian; on the other, India was concerned with the Persian-Seistan Cordon and the Afghanistan frontier. This arrangement would not be upset by the present proposal.

General Cox pointed out that General Malleson might sometimes be faced with the difficulty of deciding between conflicting demands from India and from the new Corps Commander. He suggested, therefore, that it might be preferable that the onus of decision should rest with the latter, who, in General Cox's opinion, ought to be under the India Government.

General Macdonogh replied that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff could not assent to this last proposition. The Commander-in-Chief in India could always communicate his wishes to General Cobbe (if he were the officer selected for the new command) through General Marshall. The draft clearly laid down that General Cobbe would deal with operations in those parts of Trans-Caspia only where General Marshall's troops were, and it had, moreover, the advantage of drawing no hard and fast line, but giving sufficient latitude to both parties. As an instance of a case

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that might arise, General Macdonogh said that Cobbe might possibly decide that it was necessary to withdraw; he would then inform Malleson and ask him to cover his retirement. The view of the War Office was that Marshall should control all operations facing west and that Malleson's eyes should be turned mainly to the east towards Tashkent and Afghanistan. After all, Malleson's force was almost negligible, consisting as it did of some 500 regulars, to which might be added later certain levies raised locally.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he perceived difficulties in the present proposal. General Cobbe would be able to send instructions to Malleson, who would have the right of appeal to India if those instructions were in spirit contrary to the orders he had received from the Indian Government. This, as General Cox pointed out, would place Malleson, at times, in an embarrassing position. It was true that Malleson and Dunsterville were really carrying out a common operation, and as events east of the Caspian re-acted quickly at Baku and in North Persia, it was desirable to have a single control. The War Office proposed to empower Cobbe to issue indefinite orders to Malleson, to which the latter might or might not conform. He himself had an alternative suggestion; that as Meshed, Afghanistan, and the Cordon were to be under India, the line of demarcation should be drawn north of Meshed and that Trans-Caspia should be kept under Marshall, but that the Commander-in-Chief in India should have the power of veto regarding any operations that might affect Afghanistan. The draft said that the Caspian Commander would have the power to communicate his wishes direct to Malleson; these wishes, however, would be for all intents and purposes, orders, and Malleson would have to serve two masters. Lord Robert cited a possible case where Cobbe might ask Malleson to defend Tejend; if Malleson thought this conflicted with his general instructions from Sir Charles Monro, he would have to refer to India. He himself agreed with General Cox that the discretionary power ought to be given to the senior officer, Cobbe, and not to Malleson. There must be a point, say, Askabad, at which normally the control of operations to the east were under India, but, practically, due consideration would have to be given to the military situation at Krasnovodsk, which would be under Cobbe, and in Lord Robert's view the latter officer was the right person to decide when reference should be made to India.

Mr. Montagu thought that the situation now under discussion had its origin in the promise made to General Malleson to send guns to Krasnovodsk within a few days. This promise we had not been able to fulfil. The fact that he had made it in expectation of its fulfilment did not mean a lack of co-ordination. The War Office had been expecting a telegram which had never arrived, and the draft under consideration by the Committee was really a reply to a private telegram and concerned a message which had not yet been sent. He thought the Committee could take no decision until the Government of India's telegram was received. At the same time it was desirable to find out whether the Indian Government meant to take the matter up.

The Chairman agreed that the Committee could take no action on a personal telegram, and that it was desirable to ascertain the Government of India's views. It seemed fairly clear that General Monro had in mind the creation of a special war area with its own General Officer Commanding and Staff.

General Macdonogh interposed to say that this was not possible, as Dunsterville drew his resources from General Marshall, and Malleson from India viâ Mirjawa. He suggested that the draft before the Committee should, in its amended form, be a private message from Sir Henry Wilson to Sir Charles Monro, asking if General Wilson interpreted aright Sir Charles' views, and further, if any telegram from the Indian Government might be expected.

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The Chairman considered that this suggestion correctly expressed the views of the Committee. He himself thought that the terms of the draft required hardly any alteration, but he suggested that the amended message should begin with the second part of the draft and be prefaced by some such phrase as "Our idea of the situation is as follows . . . . what are your views . . . . ?" The final message should also enquire when the telegram from the Indian Government might be expected.

The Committee agreed—

That no decision could be arrived at until the views of the Government of India had been ascertained, and authorised the despatch of the message, which should be a personal communication from Sir Henry Wilson to General Monro, amended in the above sense.

Relief of Refugees from Bijar.

3. With reference to the twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee (Minute 2), General Macdonogh said that, in accordance with the decision of the Committee, he had telegraphed to General Marshall asking the latter's views in regard to the proposal to divert the refugees to Hillah (E.C.–1259). General Marshall's reply had now been received and was as follows (E.C.–1282) :—

"Your 63558 of the 18th August. Majority of refugees will be evacuated to Baqubah, where camps are being prepared in order to facilitate supply administration. Reports are awaited from Hamadan regarding number of fighting men available among refugees with a view to making best use of suitable material for levies, &c. Labour corps will also be formed, and three are already being organised at Hamadan for work on Persian road. Disposal of remainder will not be decided until after they are collected at Baqubah."

Baku and the Caucasus.

General Macdonogh briefly summarised the latest information regarding the situation at Baku. The line of defence for the town was 18 miles in length and stretched across the Peninsula. The enemy force at present consisted of the 5th Caucasian Division, numbering some 5,000 combatants, about 2,000 Tartars and ten guns. On the 12th August one Turkish regiment had been ordered out to support the enemy's attacking forces. On the 18th August some heavy artillery had started from Batoum for Baku. On the same date the Germans and Turks had agreed as to their common action and had arrived at a settlement of their disputes regarding the use of the railway. In consequence, we might expect that as soon as the Turkish regiment and the heavy artillery joined the enemy forces, the latter would press an attack against Baku. On the 4th August the garrison there had consisted of 8,000 men. Four days later the Bolshevik part of it had fled. On the 14th instant 375 British rank and file, with 16 machine guns and some armoured cars had reached Baku, where Dunsterville was due four days later; we had, however, received no news of his arrival. To the north of Baku, Bicharakoff was said to be near Derbend, and trying to get into touch with Alexieff, who was showing signs of renewed activity. The Germans evidently wished to seize Grosny and the oil wells there. To the south of Baku we had about 3,500 Mughan Russians who, we had suggested to General Marshall, might be usefully employed to operate against the Turkish right flank. As regards Colonel Battine and his party at Krasnovodsk, they had moved forward on the 20th instant with two guns towards Askabad, but all the British officers except Battine himself were down with fever. According to latest reports the Germans had four battalions and 25 aeroplanes in the Caucasus. We had no fresh news of the movements of the Caspian fleet.

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Arabia:
Affairs of Ibn Saud.

5. With reference to E.C. 26th Meeting (Minute 1), the Chairman read a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in Egypt (E.C.–1216) which deprecated any further issue of arms to Ibn Saud, lest further complications should arise in Central Arabia between the latter and King Hussein, which complication would have the effect of diverting forces from Sherif Feisal, thereby reducing the support which he could give to General Allenby's operations. The telegram further deprecated any attack upon Ibn Rashid, with whom it was alleged Sherif Abdullah was now negotiating.

General Macdonogh read a telegram upon the same subject, dated August 20th, from the Commander-in-Chief in India, and stated that there was a practical point upon which he would like a decision of the Committee, namely, a proposal by Mr. Philby asking for permission to issue 100 rifles to Ibn Saud.

The Committee decided—

That the matter could be left to the War Office for decision.

Persian Policy.

6.—(*a*) The Chairman stated that the Committee had before them two groups of telegrams, one from the Government of India, and the other from General Sir P. Cox, at Bushire, concerning the situation at Shiraz. The former (E.C.–1233) set forth at length a series of proposals regarding our future policy in Persia. The Chairman thought that it would be unfair upon Sir P. Cox, as well as undesirable, to arrive at a definite policy until Sir P. Cox had reached Teheran, and had an opportunity of placing his views before the Persian Government.

Mr. Montagu shared the view expressed by the Chairman, and suggested that a telegram should be sent to Sir P. Cox, informing him that his general views in regard to Bushire and Shiraz were approved, and drawing his attention to the telegram from the Government of India, and asking him to report upon it.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that any delay in arriving at a decision in regard to the South Persia Rifles might prejudice the position of Vossugh-ed-Dowleh. He took the view that by far the most important point of our policy in Persia at the present moment was to ensure the maintenance in power of the present Persian Government. It might be a month or six weeks before Sir P. Cox could reach Teheran, and he took the view that in the meantime Sir P. Cox's proposals in regard to Bushire should be communicated to the Persian Government by Sir C. Marling, and it should be made clear to Vossugh-ed-Dowleh that while we were anxious to meet him in regard to the question of the South Persia Rifles in the most friendly way, we could not entertain the idea which he entertained, namely, the return of the Swedish officers. He suggested that French-Swiss officers might be suggested to the Persian Government in lieu of Swedish officers, reserving to ourselves the power to veto the selection of any particular officer. It was most important to make some attempt to meet Vossugh's wishes, in order that he might have a reply to give to his political opponents.

General Macdonogh thought that Norwegian officers could be found to replace Swedish officers.

The Chairman stated that he was most anxious to avoid a precipitate decision in regard to the future of the South Persia Rifles. Any agreement to appoint neutral officers of whatever nationality might commit us to the future maintenance in peace as well as in war of a force of 5,000 or 6,000 men of doubtful military value and loyalty at a considerable cost to ourselves. This raised a large question of policy which the Committee had never even discussed, and which it was most undesirable to prejudice by any premature undertaking now. His experience of foreign officers in Persia, whether Swedes, Belgians, or of other nationalities led him

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to the conclusion that they were anything but helpful to the country, or friendly to our interests. He reminded the Committee of the alternative proposal contained in the Government of India's telegram, that the South Persia Rifles might be handed over to the local Persian Governor-General.

General Macdonogh stated that if the South Persia Rifles were handed over to the Governor-General of Fars they would become an armed rabble, who would be easily seduced by German agents, and might threaten the security of Malleson's communications and our East Persia Cordon. The War Office would prefer to keep control of the South Persia Rifles during the war, but had little or no interest in what happened to the force after the war.

Mr. Oliphant stated that the main object of the maintenance of the South Persia Rifles in peace time was to protect the Anglo-Persian oil-fields by maintaining order and security in South Persia.

General Macdonogh thought that this might be done by the creation of a Persian army, which was by no means an impossibility.

Lord Robert Cecil pressed his view that a telegram should be sent to Sir C. Marling informing him that our first consideration was the maintenance in power of Vossugh, and our desire to come to an immediate arrangement with him in regard to the South Persia Rifles, in the event of his position being threatened should such an agreement not be arrived at.

The Chairman felt, on the other hand, that any such agreement might queer the pitch as far as Sir P. Cox was concerned, and was most anxious to postpone decision in regard to the future of the force.

Mr. Montagu drafted a telegram (E.C.–1283) (Appendix A) which, after some discussion and alteration, was adopted by the Committee.

(*b.*) With regard to the proposal in the Government of India's telegram that Sir Percy Sykes should be withdrawn, Lord Robert Cecil thought that a reply should be sent agreeing in principle with this proposal, but that in view of the uncertainty with regard to the future of the South Persia Rifles it might be undesirable to take immediate action.

The Committee agreed with this view.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
August 22, 1918.

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Lord Curzon (104)

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SECRET.

E.C. 29th Meeting.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, September 3, 1918, *at* 4 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., (*in the Chair*).

Lieut.-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O. (Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

SIR ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G. (representing the Director of Military Intelligence).

The following also attended:

Lieutenant-Colonel R. E. A. HAMILTON (for Minute 1).

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., (*Acting Secretary*).

Ibn Saud and King Hussein.

1. THE Chairman drew attention to a telegram received from India regarding the suggested supply of 1,000 rifles and 100,000 rounds of ammunition to Ibn Saud.

Mr. Montagu explained that the India Office had made a mistake on a previous occasion in submitting to the Eastern Committee a request for the supply of 100 instead of 1,000 rifles. The latter was the amount evidently regarded by the Mesopotamian authorities as the irriducible minimum required to satisfy Ibn Saud.

The Chairman pointed out that it was unlikely in view of the political situation in Arabia that the Committee would have sanctioned so large a supply as 1,000 rifles. It was really a question as to whether any rifles at all should be supplied to Ibn Saud at present. However, as 100 had been authorised, he thought it was impracticable to stop this small consignment.

It was decided that—

The previous decision of the Committee on this matter should stand.

Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton gave the following account of Ibn Saud, having spent three weeks at the latter's palace at Riadh in December 1917:—

Ibn Saud is a man of 42 years of age. He has an impressive appearance, being 6 ft. 5 in. high and weighing between 15 and 16 stone. He is a fine orator and is very keen on Arab independence. There seems little prospect of permanent peace

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between him and King Hussein, as most of the Bedouin tribes are Wahabis and belong to the Akhwan Confederation. Some of these tribes live, or rather roam, in the Hedjaz, and these King Hussein has succeeded in securing by presents of arms and money. If these subsidies ceased, they would more naturally revert to Ibn Saud. In addition to this fundamental cause, the sheikhs are jealous of each other, and there is a great deal of jealousy between Ibn Saud and King Hussein. All Arabs genuinely hate the Turks, but they still have a feeling that the Central Powers will win in the end, and so "sit on the fence." The Arabs are great politicians, and they get very good information from newsagents in Damascus. These agents travel freely down to Aneizeh in Kasim. It was unlikely that Ibn Saud contemplated making terms with the Turk, as he had taken the Turkish province of El Hasa. An Arab sheikh was not in a position to act as an autocrat. He had to pay attention to the public opinion of the tribes. It was unlikely that he would be supported by this public opinion in any attempt to fight Ibn Rashid. He (Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton) thought that Ibn Rashid desired to remain independent, and knew that if the Turks disappeared he and his tribesmen would pass under the control of Ibn Saud, in addition to which the Turkish retention of Damascus enabled them to exercise effective pressure upon Ibn Rasheid's capital at Hail. The Sultans of Turkey had always been extremely kind to Ibn Rashid's family. Numerically speaking, two-thirds of the Shammar tribes were friendly to the British and to the Arab movement, but the Rashid family and the remaining third, forming the strongest section, still kept in with the Turk.

Lieut.-Colonel Hamilton thought that Ibn Saud would not attack the Shereef as, in order to do so, he would have to combine with Ibn Rashid, and this was out of the question. Further, Ibn Saud was absolutely dependent upon supplies received with our assent and assistance from the Persian Gulf. He thought a meeting between the two principals, namely, Ibn Saud and King Hussein, might help matters, and even if the two principals did not meet, a meeting between Shereef Abdulla and Mahomed Ibn Saud, the brother of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, might result in a *modus vivendi*.

Lieut.-Colonel Gribbon said that information had been received to the effect that Ibn Rashid talked of going to Constantinople shortly.

Situation at Baku.

2. The Chairman referred to the telegram which had been received since the last meeting in regard to the very unsatisfactory situation at Baku.

Lieut.-Colonel Gribbon read to the meeting a telegram which had been received that morning from General Marshall (X. 1785) dated 2nd September, which contained a copy of a telegram he had sent to General Dunsterville, ordering the evacuation of Baku. It appeared, however, from a telegram received from the Senior Naval Officer in Baghdad, that Baku had either fallen or was about to fall, and that it was unlikely that General Dunsterville had been able to evacuate the place in time.

Persia: Arrest of Obeidullah.

3. With reference to Foreign Office telegram No. 765 (E.C. 1396) from Sir Charles Marling at Teheran, Lord Hardinge reported that the matter was being dealt with by the Foreign Office departmentally with the War Office.

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Administration of Occupied Enemy Territory in Palestine: Position of General Clayton.

4. Lord Robert Cecil drew attention to the unsatisfactory relation between the Chief Political Officer and the Chief Administrator in Palestine.

The Committee decided that—

Lord Robert Cecil should consult the War Office direct, with a view to the latter taking the necessary action to regularise the position.

2 *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*1.,
September 6, 1918.

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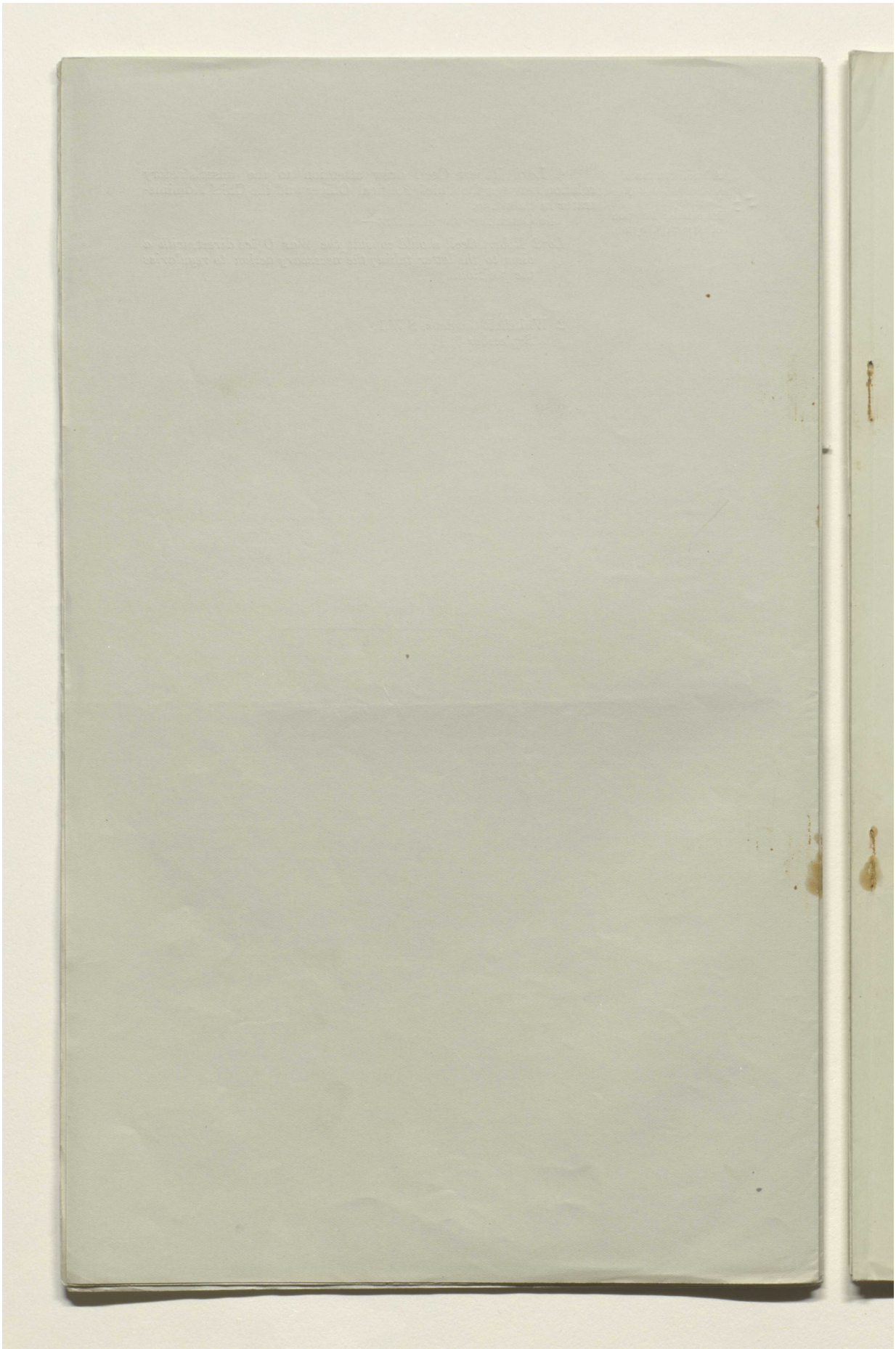

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Lord Curzon. (106)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. September 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 30th Meeting.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, September 11, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., (*in the Chair*).

Present:

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O. (Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

The following also attended:

Rear-Admiral GEORGE P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., *Treasury*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Acting Secretary*).

Situation at Baku.

The Chairman stated that the situation at Baku was still complex and obscure. It was clear that there were differences of opinion between General Dunsterville, General Marshall, and the Commander-in-Chief in India, as to the right policy to be pursued in the circumstances. The position was briefly this. General Dunsterville had been in Baku about a fortnight with about 900 British troops, 1,000 Russians, and a number of Armenians. On the 4th September the Turks were attacking and drawing nearer to the town, whose fall appeared imminent. The authorities concerned had begun to make plans for the situation after the expected fall. General Marshall seemed to be annoyed with Dunsterville, and had sent him four successive telegrams ordering withdrawal, dated the 31st August, the 2nd September, the 6th September, and the 9th September. This last was couched in somewhat severe terms, and accused Dunsterville of compromising the general situation in Persia. The War Office had hitherto supported General Marshall. They naturally felt annoyed at the recriminations in which Dunsterville had indulged, when it was

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mainly owing to his own representations that the expedition to Baku had been undertaken. The Commander-in-Chief in India, on the other hand, seemed to side with Dunsterville (E.C.-1408 and E.C.-1410), and evidently took the view that the venture was still worthy of being pursued, and that the general situation in North-West Persia was not affected by Dunsterville's reluctance to withdraw from Baku. From the latest telegrams it did indeed appear that the situation at Baku had improved. Although the Turks were in possession of the oilfields, no other attacks had been made upon the town. Dunsterville was of opinion that if Baku could hold out for a few days more, the situation might still be saved, as he hoped with the ships at his disposal to get reinforcements from General Bicharakoff. The Central Caspian Government was also unwilling to permit the evacuation of Baku by Dunsterville, unless he were accompanied by the other parties who were assisting in the defence of the town. In the circumstances, the physical difficulties involved in effecting a withdrawal seemed to be insuperable. Commodore Norris reached Enzeli on the 2nd September, and a telegram had been received from Colonel Stokes, who was acting C.G.S. to General Dunsterville, stating that Commodore Norris was now in command of a fleet. One telegram suggested that ten ships were now at our disposal and were being armed. However, an undated telegram had been received on the 10th September from Commodore Norris stating that he had not so far gained control of any ships, and that Baku was holding out under bombardment, and would fall but for the fact that a land attack had not been pressed. It seemed likely from this telegram that Commodore Norris had himself reached Baku, but the telegram itself might be several days old.

General Macdonogh stated that, in the absence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in France, he had consulted Lord Milner upon the situation. Lord Milner was inclined to agree with the line taken by the Commander-in-Chief in India, and thought that if there was any chance of Bicharakoff reinforcing Baku or of co-operation by the Terek Cossacks, and in view of our recent successes on the Western front, it would be a great mistake to evacuate Baku unless actually compelled to do so by force. In regard to the military situation, General Dunsterville had by now about two battalions of British troops in Baku, the rest of the brigade of which these two battalions formed part being distributed between Hamadan (inclusive) and Enzeli. There were two companies in Kasvin, and two companies in Enzeli. If the whole brigade were to be moved to Baku, as asked by Dunsterville, the forces on the Hamadan-Enzeli road would have to be replaced by other troops sent up from Mesopotamia. The Turks were undoubtedly advancing from Tabriz along the Mianeh-Zinjan road. Their force consisted of about 1,500 men of the 11th Caucasian Division, and in no circumstances whatever could the Hamadan road be left unprotected. The Turkish force opposite Baku consisted of about 1,000 sabres, 6,000 rifles, 100 machine guns, and 26 guns. The Turks also had the assistance of about 8,000 Irregulars. The Germans had 5,500 rifles in Trans-Caucasia, chiefly in the Poti-Tiflis area. It was doubtful whether the Germans would come to the assistance of the Turks at Baku.

The Chairman referred to a report that an agreement had been concluded between the Germans and Turks, under which the Turks were to retain Baku on condition that they provided the Germans with oil. The question was, whether it would be possible for Dunsterville to hold out in the long run, even if he were reinforced by Bicharakoff.

General Macdonogh stated that the latter question depended very largely on the development of the situation in Cis-Caucasia, where matters seemed to have improved. General Alexieff was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tsaritsin, with 25,000 men.

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General Macdonogh drew attention to a telegram which had been received from Baku suggesting the evacuation of 10,000 Armenian women and children by sea to Enzeli, which pointed to the possession of ships at our disposal. Such an evacuation might have serious consequences upon the food situation in North-West Persia, and would constitute a serious strain on General Marshall's transport, and might prejudice the possibility of sending up reinforcements to Enzeli.

Mr. Montagu emphasised the importance of keeping Enzeli, and in order to make sure of this, it would be essential to send up more troops to the Hamadan road.

General Macdonogh stated that the supply of troops along the Hamadan road, and the maintenance of communication with Baku, was seriously prejudiced by the reluctance of the Americans to permit the despatch of 1,300 Ford vans to Turkish theatres of war, owing to the fact that America is still not at war with Turkey.

Lord Hardinge thought that this difficulty was in process of being overcome, and that the Ford vans would be delivered.

The Committee decided—

That the War Office should send instructions to General Marshall telling him to maintain General Dunsterville at Baku, if possible, and requesting him to reinforce the forces on the Hamadan-Enzeli road, and to stop, at all costs, the evacuation of the 10,000 *Armenian women and children.*

At a later stage of the meeting, a more recent telegram was received by General Macdonogh, giving information to the effect that Colonel Clutterbuck had arrived at Enzeli, having left Baku on the 6th September. On that date the town was still holding out, and rumours were current that the Turks were withdrawing. It was commonly reported that the Germans, and not the Turks, would occupy Baku. There was no news from Bicharakoff, and Turkish battalions had reached Mianeh.

Suggested Unification of Political and Military Control in the Eastern Theatres of War under India.

2. The Chairman read to the Committee a telegram (E.C. 1295) from the Commander-in-Chief in India, dated the 21st August, regarding the strategic situation in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Trans-Caspia, in which he argued in favour of a unified command to be exercised from India.

General Macdonogh stated that the main fallacy contained in this telegram lay in the appreciation given by the Commander-in-Chief regarding the military policy which the Germans might be able to carry out. The War Office took the view that it would not be possible for the Germans to take advantage of the comparative cessation of military operations on the Western front during the winter months to indulge in any big campaign in the East. He read to the Committee a draft reply to the Commander-in-Chief in India's telegram, which would be circulated to the Committee forthwith for observations. In regard to the railway construction programme submitted by the Commander-in-Chief in India, the War Office took the view that the output of rails in India should be at the disposal of the Empire as a whole, and not Indian projects only. Sir Sam Fay was counting on 600 miles of Indian rails for authorised construction in Mesopotamia. Further, they held that any prolongation of the Mirjawa Railway beyond that already authorised by the Committee was undesirable.

Mr. Balfour recalled that this problem had been carefully examined by the Committee of Imperial Defence, who had come to the conclusion that it was most undesirable to extend the railway, which would be extremely vulnerable in the event of Afghanistan becoming hostile.

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In regard to the general question of political and military control, General Macdonogh stated that the War Office were very anxious to avoid the establishment of dual military control, partly in London and partly in India, as all theatres were so interdependent that it was essential that control should be centralised somewhere, and that could only be in London.

Mr. Montagu dissented from this view, and stated that, in his opinion, it was desirable to have a separate Eastern Command. Hitherto all military opinion had been opposed to this, but now the Commander-in-Chief had come forward with the very proposal which he had advocated for some time past. He thought that it was clear that General Marshall regarded the Caspian and Persian theatres as unwelcome adjuncts which might interfere with his further operations in Mesopotamia. This pointed to the necessity of some change in the higher military organisation in the East. He realised, however, that the Committee had already decided in the opposite sense.

Further discussion on this subject was adjourned until Tuesday next.

North-West Persia: Railways and Roads.

3. General Macdonogh stated that the main thing to be done was to improve the communication between Mesopotamia and Hamadan by the Kermanshah road. It was proposed to continue the Tigris-Diala railway to Kasr-i-Shirin. An alternative proposal had been made to continue the railway through Kirkuk to the waters of the lesser Zab. This would enable our operations to develop in the direction of Lake Urumia on the flank of any Turkish advance from Tabriz in a south-easterly direction, and would give us control of valuable oil-bearing areas round Kirkuk, which had a much better climate than that of Baghdad owing to its greater elevation above sea level.

In the absence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff no final decision had been reached upon this project, which did not appear to be favoured by General Marshall.

Persia: Attitude of Persian Government.

4. The Committee had before them three telegrams (E.C.-1465, 1468, and Foreign Office telegram No. 800 from Sir C. Marling, dated the 10th September). These telegrams all suggested that the Prime Minister of Persia was in favour of abandoning neutrality and joining us. On the other hand, in General Marshall's view it was undesirable that Persia should abandon her attitude of neutrality, inasmuch as we should be held responsible for any Turkish devastation of Persian territories. It was pointed out, however, that the Turks had already advanced far into Persia, and would probably devastate the country whether Persia remained neutral or not.

General Macdonogh stated that Lord Milner was in favour of bringing Persia into the war on our side.

The Chairman referred to a telegram sent by the British Military Attaché at Teheran to General Dunsterville on the 5th September, from which it would appear that an ultimatum had already been sent by the Turks to the Persian Government.

The Committee decided—

To await receipt of further information from Sir C. Marling before coming to a decision.

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Persia: Expenditure by General Dunsterville.

5. The Committee had before them a memorandum by Mr. Keynes, of the Treasury (E.C.-1492), regarding the serious financial situation in Persia due to the heavy calls made upon the Imperial Bank of Persia by General Dunsterville.

Mr. Keynes stated that Dunsterville had already run down the Treasury of the Imperial Bank of Persia to danger point, and that there were no possible means of providing him with money at the present exorbitant rate of expenditure. The highest amount the Imperial Bank of Persia had hitherto furnished to us in one month had been 22,000,000 krans, and the average provision hitherto had been 16,000,000 krans. By cutting down the reserves of the Imperial Bank of Persia it might be possible to furnish 25,000,000 krans a month. Dunsterville's demand for the month of September amounted however to 65,000,000 krans—which could not possibly be met. The latter's expenditure was both unauthorised and unexplained. No telegrams had been received from him at the War Office accounting for such extravagant disbursements of money. Mr. Keynes hoped that telegrams would be sent to Sir C. Marling instructing the Bank to desist from honouring Dunsterville's drafts, and to the latter limiting his expenditure to 15,000,000 krans a month.

General Macdonogh stated that, in his view, an official of the Imperial Bank of Persia should be attached to Dunsterville's administrative headquarters, since it was clear that he had no idea of the financial difficulties which he was creating.

Mr. Montagu stated that provision of silver was out of the question, but that the Government of India would do all that was possible to provide the Imperial Bank of Persia with the necessary rupee bills.

Mr. Keynes pointed out that there was practically no note circulation in Persia, and that a forced paper issue would probably ruin the Bank, and would certainly ruin our prestige in Persia. There was a limit to the number of rupee bills which could be provided by India, and a still further limitation to the number which the Imperial Bank of Persia could sell.

The Chairman thought that General Dunsterville should be immediately asked for a full explanation of his expenditure under the various heads, and instructed to budget on a greatly reduced scale, and further that a telegram should be sent to Teheran inviting the opinion of the British Minister in consultation with the Imperial Bank of Persia as to the maximum monthly extent to which they could meet Dunsterville's demands.

Mr. Oliphant asked that it should be made clear to Sir C. Marling that political calls on the Bank made by him or Sir P. Cox in pursuance of agreement with the Persian Government should have priority over Dunsterville's demands.

Mr. Balfour agreed that it would be fatal to starve Sir C. Marling in order to provide Dunsterville with funds.

The Committee requested Mr. Keynes to draft two telegrams (Appendices "A" and "B"), "A" for despatch to General Marshall for General Dunsterville, and "B" to Sir C. Marling.

Palestine and Arabia: Position of General Clayton.

6. The Committee took note of a telegram from Sir R. Wingate (E.C.-1448) appointing General Clayton Director of all Branches of the Arab Bureau in addition to acting as Chief Political Officer for Palestine and the Hejaz.

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Arabia:
Supply of Rifles to Bin Saud.

7. The Committee had before them a Memorandum by the Political Department of the India Office (E.C.-1495) regarding the supply of rifles to Bin Saud.

Mr. Montagu stated that unless we sent Bin Saud 1,000 serviceable rifles asked for, it would be better not to send any. The Committee had been misled in approving the despatch of 100 rifles owing to a clerical error in the India Office. He supported Mr. Shuckburgh's suggestion that we should issue 1,000 serviceable rifles to Bin Saud in exchange for the 1,000 unserviceable rifles now in his possession.

General Macdonogh stated that the War Office were opposed to the issue of any serviceable rifles to Bin Saud, and were also opposed to the suggested expedition against Hail. He read a draft telegram which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff proposed to despatch to the Commander-in-Chief in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India (Appendix "C").

The Chairman thought that the trouble arose from the encouragement given by Philby to the personal ambitions of Bin Saud, which were already sufficiently large to cause serious embarrassment in the future. He suggested that we should inform Bin Saud that, while our promise to give him 1,000 serviceable rifles still held good, we could not fulfil the undertaking at the present moment. It should be Philby's duty to slow things down at Riadh and keep Bin Saud quiet.

Mr. Shuckburgh stated that Philby was under the impression that it was his duty to encourage Bin Saud to undertake hostile action against Ibn Rashid or other Turcophil Arabs, and if this policy was now to be altered, definite instructions should be sent to him to that effect.

The Chairman read a telegram from General Allenby deprecating any operations by Bin Saud against Hail, on the ground that any such attack, even if successful, might seriously prejudice the co-operation of Sherif Feisal's forces with the British forces in Palestine.

Mr. Montagu stated that his only wish was to keep Bin Saud quiet, and that he thought the best way of doing this was to issue the 1,000 rifles now asked for. He gathered that Sir R. Wingate had no objection to such an issue.

The Committee decided—

That a telegram should be sent to Philby ordering him to inform Bin Saud that, while not receding from the undertaking to give him 1,000 *serviceable rifles, it was not convenient to make the gift at the present time. At a later date the matter might be reconsidered. Philby should also be told to deprecate any action by Bin Saud against Hail.*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*
September 11, 1918.

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APPENDIX (A).

From War Office to G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia; C.-in-C., India.

(66168 cipher. D.M.O.)

September 12, 1918.

IT is a matter of great importance curtailment should be effected in expenditure of Persian currency in connection with forces and organisations under your command or control.

It is impossible for Imperial Bank to continue to finance Dunsterville if his expenditure continues at present rates. The maximum monthly sum in Persian currency which can be made available for all military purposes in North-West Persia does not probably exceed 15,000,000 krans, that is about a quarter of the present demands.

To following questions require a specific answer: (1) Is Dunsterville financing local authorities or forces at Baku? (2) On what major heads is Dunsterville incurring expenditure, *e.g.*, supplies, road-work, levies, intelligence; and what are his demands under each head? (3) What do you think of relative value of expenditure on levies and results obtained? (4) With reference to (2), what curtailment do you consider can be made? It is necessary for the Treasury to make a clear monthly budget, as there is a definite physical limitation to the funds which can be provided by the Imperial Bank. In future, therefore, monthly estimates of total expenditure must be submitted to us for approval in advance, and actual expenditure must be strictly limited to the maximum so approved by us from time to time. Dunsterville has shown a grave misapprehension as to the facts of the financial position in Persia, in incurring expenditure on the enormous scale now reported without notice either to us or to the Imperial Bank representatives in Persia. Can you impress on those concerned the seriousness of their financial responsibilities? Addressed Baghdad, repeated India.

APPENDIX (B).

Cypher telegram to Sir C. Marling (Teheran).

(No. 487. Urgent). *Foreign Office, September* 13, 1918. 12.50 *p.m.*

YOUR telegrams Nos. 779 and 784 (of the 5th and 6th September. Dunsterville's requirements).

Dunsterville's and other military demands appear to be on an impossible scale.

Please ascertain from chief manager of Imperial Bank of Persia and report by telegraph immediately:—

(*a.*) Present cash reserves of Bank.

(*b.*) Amount the Bank anticipate they can find for all Government purposes during September and October respectively, assuming that rupees are allotted to them up to their full requirements.

(*c.*) Requirements during September and October for all purposes (other than Dunsterville's), including expenditure of Indian politicals and expenditure in East and South Persia, specifying items separately.

(*d.*) Amount of rupees Bank think that they could sell if Government of India agree to furnish them.

G.O.C., Mesopotamia, is also being instructed to inform Dunsterville that rigid economy is imperative.

You will understand that such political expenditure as you have already been authorised to incur should take priority.

Your telegram 784. Second paragraph.

No silver can be supplied.

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APPENDIX (C).

Draft of proposed telegram from the C.I.G.S. to the Commanders-in-Chief in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India.

IN view of conflicting expressions of opinion regarding King Hussein and Ibn Saud's trouble it might be useful if, for your personal guidance, I record my views, which are as follows. The quarrel at Khurma is not a question of boundaries, but of the deep-seated and historical antagonism between the Wahabis and Hejaz. King Hussein's professed object in the Khurma expedition is to punish Khalil, whom he appointed, and who has revolted from him. Our information regarding Khurma itself is not sufficient to justify any expression of opinion regarding the rights of ownership; but, from a military point of view, it is essential that King Hussein's confidence in our support should be maintained. He has a difficult position, and has proved himself to be a distinct military advantage, against which the claims of Ibn Saud cannot compete.

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Lord Curzon.

(110)

Printed for the War Cabinet. September 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 31st Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of the 31st Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Tuesday, September 17, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (representing the Secretary of State).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P. Secretary of State for India.

The following also attended:

SIR E. CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Assistant Secretary, Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Temporary Deputy Secretary*).

Suggested Unification of Political and Military Control in the Eastern Theatres of War under India.

1. IN resuming the discussion commenced at the 30th Meeting of the Committee upon the suggestion put forward by the Commander-in-Chief in India in his telegram (E.C.–1295), the Chairman stated that the previous evening General Smuts had submitted a confidential Memorandum to the War Cabinet upon the possibility of Germany resuming offensive operations in the Middle East next year. General Smuts was much concerned at the complexity and confusion of authority which still existed in regard to military and political control in the Caspian, Turkestan, Persian, and Mesopotamian theatres. He took the view that as soon as military operations became stabilised in the West, the Germans would prepare not only to consolidate their position in what was formerly Russian territory, but also seek to threaten the British Empire in Asia. He held that, while it was impracticable to eliminate War Office control and set up a separate control in India, unity of direction was urgently required so that the German menace might be met more effectively. He proposed that General Monro should cease to be Commander-in-Chief in India and should be placed at Baghdad in control of all Eastern operations under the War Office. He was impressed by the somewhat unsatisfactory nature of General Marshall's advice in regard to the situation in North-West Persia and in the Caspian, due, no doubt, to General Marshall's main preoccupation being centred in operations on the Euphrates and the Tigris. Since the receipt of General Smuts' Memorandum, a letter

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had been sent to Mr. Balfour by Lord Robert Cecil, drawing somewhat similar conclusions from the same premises. He gathered that Lord Robert Cecil's idea was to create a Middle Eastern Department of the General Staff at the War Office and the appointment of a General Officer in supreme command over all Eastern theatres. General Smuts was returning to London the following day, and he therefore proposed that further discussion of the subject should be postponed for a special Meeting of the Eastern Committee, at which both General Smuts and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff could be present.

Mr. Montagu stated that, after the last Meeting, he had handed to General Macdonogh a rough diagram illustrating a proposal similar in object to that made by General Smuts.

General Macdonogh stated that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff thought that complications would arise with the Indian Government if the Commander-in-Chief in India were placed in command of all Middle Eastern theatres, as General Monro was primarily the servant of the Government of India.

The Chairman added that the Commander-in-Chief in India was a Member of the Government of India in Council for military purposes, and that the Governor-General's Council would be placed in a somewhat anomalous position if the Commander-in-Chief in India were placed for all purposes under the War Office, and was bound to carry out its orders irrespective of the views of the Government of India.

Caspian Situation.

2. The Chairman stated that, at the last Meeting, it had been agreed, in consequence of telegrams received from General Dunsterville, that the latter should be authorised to remain at Baku. This decision had been reached largely owing to the hope that assistance would be forthcoming from General Bicharakoff at Petrovsk, the first party of whose forces had been reported to have reached Baku. It appeared, however, from a telegram received the previous day that General Dunsterville had abandoned Baku and had evacuated the town, bringing with him 1,200 men. It was not clear whether these 1,200 men were all British troops or not. General Dunsterville had proceeded to Enzeli and not to Krasnovodsk, and the focus of interest was accordingly now transferred to Enzeli, Krasnovodsk, and Kasvin. It seemed to be vital to hold on to Enzeli, as the main object of the expedition had been to secure naval command of the Caspian Sea. The most serious information that had been received in the last few days lay in the fact that, owing to the advance of the Turks on the Mianeh road and consequent threat to Kasvin, General Marshall appeared to be contemplating the withdrawal of troops from Enzeli to reinforce our troops at Kasvin.

General Macdonogh stated that we were still without information regarding the Caspian fleet. It would appear that General Dunsterville had obtained the use of ten ships, but nothing was known of the remainder.

Admiral Hope stated that Commodore Norris proposed to arm ten ships and six tugs, and with these it should be possible to ensure naval control of the Caspian.

General Macdonogh stated that the last instructions from General Marshall to General Dunsterville were to evacuate from Baku to Krasnovodsk. The latter had however, gone to Enzeli, probably in order to evacuate the sick and to get further supplies of ammunition. There were rumours that the Bolsheviks at Astrakhan were contemplating an expedition to Krasnovodsk in order to turn us out of that place. Information had been received, however, that the Cossacks had taken Tsaritsin, which fact constituted a grave threat to the Bolsheviks in Astrakhan. In the event of our being compelled to withdraw from Enzeli in order to

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defend Kasvin, any troops at Krasnovodsk would have to depend for supplies and ammunition upon Meshed. The most serious factor in the position at Krasnovodsk was the shortage of water supplies.

Lord Hardinge asked whether it would be possible to get more of Bicharakoff's men at Krasnovodsk.

General Macdonogh replied that there had been difficulties between Bicharakoff and the Turkestan Government, and probably the latter would not welcome his co-operation in Krasnovodsk. In regard to the situation in North-West Persia, he thought that the Turkish threat was not so serious as it might seem at first sight. The Turks were having great difficulties in obtaining supplies in Tabriz, and the railway which supplied Tabriz was working intermittently owing to shortage of oil. It was unlikely that the Turks could send up reinforcements to Tabriz until the end of September. The Turkish position was, like our own, very much handicapped owing to shortage of transport.

Transcaspia.

3. General Macdonogh stated that there was no change in the situation in Transcaspia. General Malleson's forces were still fighting in the neighbourhood of Kaahka.

The Chairman said that he understood that Macartney had reached Tashkent from Kashgar.

General Macdonogh stated that three British officers had left India some time ago for Kashgar, and it was probable that all of them were now in Tashkent.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
September 17, 1918.

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Lord Curzon (112)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. October 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 32nd Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, September 18, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., *(in the Chair)*.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.	The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.
The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.	General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Also present:

The Right Hon. the LORD HARDINGE OF PENSHURST, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., I.S.O. (Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).	Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.
	Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR (*Secretary*).

Persia: Arrest of Obeidullah.

1. General Wilson, with reference to Eastern Committee, 29th Meeting, Minute 3, said that there was some divergence of opinion between his own Department and the Foreign Office as to the action that should be taken in the case of Obeidullah, in respect of whom two telegrams had been received from Sir Charles Marling, the terms of the first of which were inaccurate; it appeared possible, therefore, that Marling was also misinformed in respect of his second message. Marling had referred to a telegram of Dunsterville's which had not been received by the War Office, and Marling had been requested to furnish a copy. Obeidullah was at present at Baghdad as a prisoner of war, and the contention of the Foreign Office was, that as Marling had promised that he should be released, this promise must be fulfilled. General Wilson suggested that no further action should be taken until a copy of General Dunsterville's telegram had been received.

Mr. Balfour said that his Department were quite prepared to detain Obeidullah in custody if a sufficient and legitimate cause for so doing could be furnished; otherwise, of course, it would be impossible for Marling to go back on his word.

The Committee agreed—

That action should be deferred for the present.

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The Caspian and Trans-Caspia.

2. The Chairman read to the Committee two telegrams which he had received a few minutes before the meeting, one from the Commander-in-Chief in India, No. 74078, dated the 16th September (E.C.–1579), forwarding a message from General Malleson that information received from Askabad on the 14th instant was to the effect that the Bolsheviks in Astrakhan had armed five named steamers for service in the Caspian, and further suggesting that if the Enzeli route was closed, the naval contingent and their guns should come via Hamadan and Teheran to Meshed, and thence to Krasnovodsk. Even if ships were not available to arm, they would be of the greatest value for the defence of Krasnovodsk against attack from the sea. In this connection the Chairman pointed out that the statement in General Smuts' paper (E.C.–1565) that "our friends in Russia held Petrovsk and Astrakhan" was unfortunately untrue of Astrakhan, which was in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

The second message, dated 17th September, was from Commodore, Persian Gulf (E.C.–1578), to the following effect:—

> "Expect representatives of the fleet here to-day or to-morrow. Dunsterville leaves to-morrow and evacuation of Enzeli is ordered. Thus, just as there is a chance of coming to terms, the fleet will see British troops being weakened. This may result in hostile action. It will stop efforts to continue arming ships. Please telegraph 'clear the line' what is now our policy and whether efforts to get control of Caspian are to continue. Naval control is only effective if backed by military forces."

The Chairman said that, if the information received by the Commodore was accurate, it showed that Dunsterville had evacuated or was evacuating Enzeli, in accordance with General Marshall's instructions and was retiring on Kasvin. The above telegrams complicated the situation and showed the great confusion that at present prevailed in the Caspian area.

The Committee agreed—

That the evacuation of Enzeli, following closely upon that of Baku, would be highly prejudicial to our prestige, and that it was desirable to hold on to Enzeli at all costs if it were not too late.

The Committee accordingly directed the War Office to telegraph urgently to General Marshall stating the great importance His Majesty's Government attached to the retention of Enzeli, and instructing him that the port should only be evacuated as a last resort and on account of urgent military necessity.

Suggested Unification of Political and Military Control in the Eastern Theatres of War under India.

3. The Committee resumed the discussion of the question of the suggested unification of political and military control in the Eastern theatres of war under India (31st Meeting, Minute 1). The Committee had before them a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India, No. 66078 (E.C.–1295), the Chief of the Imperial General Staff's draft reply to the above (E.C.–1534), a Memorandum by General Smuts regarding the military command in the Middle East (E.C.–1565), and a letter from Lord Robert Cecil to Mr. Balfour (E.C.–1564) (Appendices (A), (B), (C), and (D)).

General Smuts said that his paper raised two points: first, the question of unity of command. In regard to this he thought it impossible to demarcate the provinces politically and militarily, especially the latter. The previous week the Government of India had proposed that there should be unity of command which would be exercised from India; this proposition he himself did not regard as practicable. It was true that the troops in that theatre were mainly supplied from India, but his view was, that our policy must

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continue to be directed from England. He was in favour of unity of command, but not that that command should be directed by the Indian Government. His second point was, in whose hands should the single command be? It must be entrusted to an officer of great experience and sound judgment. He was opposed to placing this command in the hands of a Committee as had been suggested by Lord R. Cecil. General Smuts, proceeding, said that he had nothing to say against General Marshall as a fine fighting soldier, but he had not been impressed by the judgment and coherent grasp of the situation shown either by General Marshall or by Sir C. Marling. His impression was, that our men on the spot were not properly in touch with affairs and failed to give the Committee adequate material on which to form a sound judgment. Marshall had, in the first instance, been given a simple, soldier's, job, which was to exploit the Tigris valley. Since then, great complications had arisen. Had Marshall shown himself equal to dealing with this more complicated situation? For months the Committee had impressed upon him that Mesopotamia was now, at any rate for the present, relatively unimportant, that he was being out-flanked in the North, and that the forward movement of the enemy towards the Caspian constituted a grave menace to India. What the Committee had instructed him to do was to threaten the Turkish flank on the new and more formidable route to the East, which they were opening up by the Caucasus and the Caspian. Instead of realising the position, Marshall was constantly raising objections to the carrying out of our policy and harping on the difficulties of reinforcing and holding the Hamadan–Kasvin road, on which, however, the Turks, in the earlier days of the war, had managed to maintain considerable forces. General Smuts said it was clear to him that Marshall did not understand the situation and he thought that his want of insight constituted a danger at the present juncture. His eyes were always turned directly northwards; he could no doubt take Mosul to-morrow, but that was not our present objective. What we wanted to do was to block the new Eastern route. Marshall persisted in regarding Dunsterville's move to the Caspian as an unsound diversion of force, which indicated that, although he might be a good fighting General, the present strategical situation was one which he and his Staff were unable to grasp. Who then was to be given the command in his place? He had been struck by General Monro's telegrams, which gave evidence of sound and ripe judgment, and General Smuts thought that the reason why General Munro wished to control operations in the Middle East himself was that he saw that things were going wrong and thought that his suggestion offered a solution to the problem. To give an instance of his clear-sightedness, General Munro, in a recent telegram, pointed out that the present danger was to Enzeli rather than to Hamadan. For the above reasons, General Smuts thought that General Monro seemed to be the right man to be on the spot, and he suggested that he should vacate his present position as Commander-in-Chief in India, temporarily, if necessary, and be replaced there by a man who would work with him loyally and in close co-operation, as this theatre depended on India for troops, rails, supplies, &c.

The Chairman interposed to say that he thought there were precedents for a Commander-in-Chief in India vacating his position temporarily in time of war and being replaced by a *locum tenens*, and cited the case of Sir F. Haines who, in the Afghan War, left Simla in order to take the field. There was also the case of Sir Power Palmer who had temporarily filled the post of Commander-in-Chief in India after Sir William Lockhart's death until Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief-designate, could be spared from South Africa.

General Smuts, continuing, said that he regarded the present situation as being very grave. We now held large slices of Turkish territory which we did not desire to hand back to them. To-day the tide had turned in the West and the Germans were in retreat. In

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the Middle East, however, the initiative appeared to be passing to the Turks, and, apart from the danger to India, if they achieved any considerable successes, our position in regard to this theatre would be distinctly unfavourable when we came to discuss terms of peace. There was no doubt that it was in the East that we were most vulnerable, and it was essential to deal firmly with the situation without delay.

General Wilson said that he agreed with General Smuts on the question of the unity of command. As regards the military position, however, he did not take so pessimistic a view; nor did he agree as to the value set by General Smuts upon the respective capacities of Generals Monro and Marshall. We already had unity of command from Baghdad to Krasnovodsk, and this command General Smuts would extend to Meshed. The rough-and-ready rule adopted by the War Office had been that men based on Baghdad should remain under the War Office, and those based on Meshed should be under India. He did not think it wise to hand over the control of operations in Mesopotamia to India. In its essence, General Smuts' point was that a change of personnel was required; beyond that, his suggestion merely amounted to placing Malleson's force under the command of the G.O.C., Mesopotamia.

The Chairman pointed out that if the enemy crossed the Caspian and obtained control of the Transcaspian railway, Malleson's area might extend to Bokhara and even Tashkent, and would greatly increase in importance.

General Wilson said that the real difficulty was that of transport. This difficulty equally confronted the enemy, who was no more able than ourselves to push forward considerable forces. General Marshall felt that he would not allow himself to be cut in two at Kasvin and for this reason he wished to withdraw from Enzeli. In that view he might be quite right, although he might be disposed to exaggerate the menace to the Kasvin line. If the Bolsheviks already commanded the Caspian Sea and controlled the fleet the loss of Enzeli was not such a serious matter. Any ships we might have in our possession we could either take to Krasnovodsk or sink.

General Smuts said that to give up the Caspian meant a very serious retreat on our part.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that Baku had fallen and that it was reported that we had already evacuated Enzeli. If this was the case, the Caspian was lost to us.

General Wilson said that in General Smuts' view, General Marshall was not equal to his position in the altered circumstances, and that it would be better to replace him by General Monro. He did not agree with this view, and read various telegrams from General Monro which, he pointed out, were contradictory in the advice they gave. It was evident that General Monro had the same difficulty as the Committee in appreciating the situation. Further, to offer General Monro the Mesopotamia command, increased only by Malleson's 500 men, was derogatory to an officer who held the biggest command open in peace time to anyone in the British service.

General Smuts pointed out that the Middle Eastern command would be more important than that of Palestine, and he understood that General Monro was hardly, if at all, senior to General Allenby.

Mr. Montagu interposed to ask whether General Smuts intended that General Monro should replace General Marshall or whether General Marshall should continue to serve, or that some other officer should serve, in actual command in the field under General Monro's orders. He asked this question because when he was in India he knew that General Monro did not think himself physically capable of taking command in the field owing to the consequences of an accident to his leg which he thought he had sustained in Gallipoli. When General Maude died, the Viceroy and he had considered

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whether it was not their duty to suggest that Sir Charles Monro would be available to succeed General Maude pending the arrival of some officer from home, and that they would be willing that his Chief of the Staff, General Kirkpatrick, should deputise for him meanwhile as Commander-in-Chief in India. The proposal had, however, not been put forward simply because of General Monro's expression of the above opinion.

General Smuts said that his proposal was that Sir Charles Monro should be Commander-in-Chief on the spot in the Middle East and should replace General Marshall.

General Wilson said that the whole problem was one of pushing up troops from Mesopotamia to North-West Persia, and this was a matter of communication and transport. Whether General Marshall had proved himself a sufficiently exacting slave-driver in the matter of road-making might be open to question, but General Wilson himself did not think that any other man would have been more successful. He reminded the Committee of the recent difficulty in regard to the 1,300 Ford vans (30th Meeting, Minute 1) which the American Government were reluctant to supply. His view that it would have been impossible for General Marshall to have pushed up more men into Persia was shared by General Cobbe, who had recently been in this country. The line of communication consisted of 500 miles of bad roads, and, in some places, no roads at all. It was here that a railway was an urgent necessity, but the Indian Government were pressing instead for an extension of the Seistan Railway, which, in General Wilson's opinion, was relatively unimportant. He doubted whether anybody, in the circumstances, could be expected to have a complete strategical appreciation of the situation; the immediate problem, however, was a very simple one, namely, to get troops into Persia and to deny the Eastern route to the enemy.

General Smuts wished again to emphasise his point that General Marshall had regarded the Caspian project as unimportant and an unwelcome diversion. He even contemplated so serious a step as that of evacuating Enzeli without consulting the Governments.

General Wilson thought General Marshall might have no other course open to him, unless he wished his force there to be cut in two.

Mr. Montagu asked whether General Wilson could say what he would do in General Marshall's place. Would he not be intent on capturing Mosul and joining hands with Allenby? Was not that the legitimate ambition of anyone with the Mesopotamian victories behind him? Was it not likely that that would be the trend of General Marshall's ambition?

General Wilson replied that he did not think so, that the policy of the War Office was well known to all commanders, to advance steadily northwards with our forces in that theatre spread out umbrella-wise from Haifa to the Caspian.

Mr. Montagu said that he agreed most cordially with General Smuts' premises, and with the arguments which led him to the conclusions he had formed, but he regarded the remedy he suggested as inadequate to the problem. General Smuts said that he wished to achieve unity of command. All that General Smuts suggested to this end was to link up Malleson's force with Marshall's under a new officer. What the Indian Government proposed would achieve unity from the North-West frontier to the Mediterranean. But if the seat of this united command was not in India, then, in that the defence of India and of the Indian frontiers could only be controlled from India, we could not get unity of command, but at the most duality of command. What seemed to him to be wanted was a sort of Eastern Foch, taking his orders from the War Office, and embracing Persia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Trans-Caspia, and India. This would necessitate that the Commander-in-Chief in India, relieved of as much administrative work as possible by some *ad hoc* arrangement, should carry out the functions

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of Indian defence under the same authority as now, and receive from the War Office his orders for the rest of the area under his command. This had been negatived as impossible, and therefore he would welcome the appointment of General Monro if he could be spared from India to take charge of the non-Indian part of the theatre, commanding either at Baghdad or possibly, as an alternative, at Cairo. But this new Eastern Command should then be linked with the Indian Command by a link at home. This might be done by appointing another Deputy C.I.G.S. to work under General Wilson, and to be responsible for communicating the orders of the War Office to the new Eastern Commander-in-Chief, and to be in such relation with the India Office also as to enable him to be the channel of communication to the Government of India on Army matters. Thus, although the new Commander-in-Chief would not be in India, the resulting duality could be remedied in England. If the new Commander-in-Chief, however, were General Monro, he had only to repeat the difficulty he had already mentioned to the Committee, which seemed to make it absolutely essential that the active command in the field should be given in each area to some subordinate agent acting under General Monro's general control, and he would add one other point. General Monro was filling the most difficult position with conspicuous success, and under him the Indian army was recovering from the depression and lack of self-confidence which followed the Mesopotamian Commission's report. He had, moreover, reorganised the army and organised the North-West frontier of India on a new basis, and it would be a grave step to remove him from India just when the menace on the North-West frontier might be drawing nearer.

General Wilson said he wished again to say that he could not agree that matters were in such a bad way as some members of the Committee seemed to think, nor did he regard big changes and new inflated Staffs as at all necessary. General Marshall had all the troops that he needed, and even more than he really required. His difficulty was that of transport, and no amount of changes in personnel or administration could create more Ford cars.

Mr. Balfour agreed with General Smuts that Marshall had not got the right perspective. General Marshall's services in this war had been almost entirely rendered in Mesopotamia, and he evidently found it difficult to turn his eyes away from his old, and immediate, front. What we were asking him to do was to look upon Mesopotamia as a side-show and the Caspian as being more important, but the impression which Marshall's telegrams gave was that his gaze was still riveted upon Mesopotamia and that he was unable to look beyond. As regards the necessity for a change of personnel, Mr. Balfour was in agreement with General Smuts. As regards unity of command, he thought Mr. Montagu was right in saying that this did not exist at present. He did not, however, go so far as Mr. Montagu in wishing to include India in this command. He regarded the threat to our Indian frontier as remote, and he hoped and believed that it would remain so, at any rate during the present war. For the moment, therefore, the Indian frontier was not included in the Middle-Eastern theatre, much extended as that theatre had been. He could not feel that General Marshall fully grasped the magnitude of the problem we had to solve. No body or individual responsible, as was their Committee, for big operations of war, had, he thought, ever been kept so much in ignorance of our resources and of the state of affairs.

General Wilson said that he would like to refer to Lord Robert Cecil's letter to Mr. Balfour. He would ask the Committee who it was that Persia was under? The position was that we were at peace with the Persian Government and yet we were fighting in North-West Persia, and this greatly increased our difficulties.

The Chairman said that he did not entirely accept the account of the situation, complex as it is, that was given in Lord Robert's

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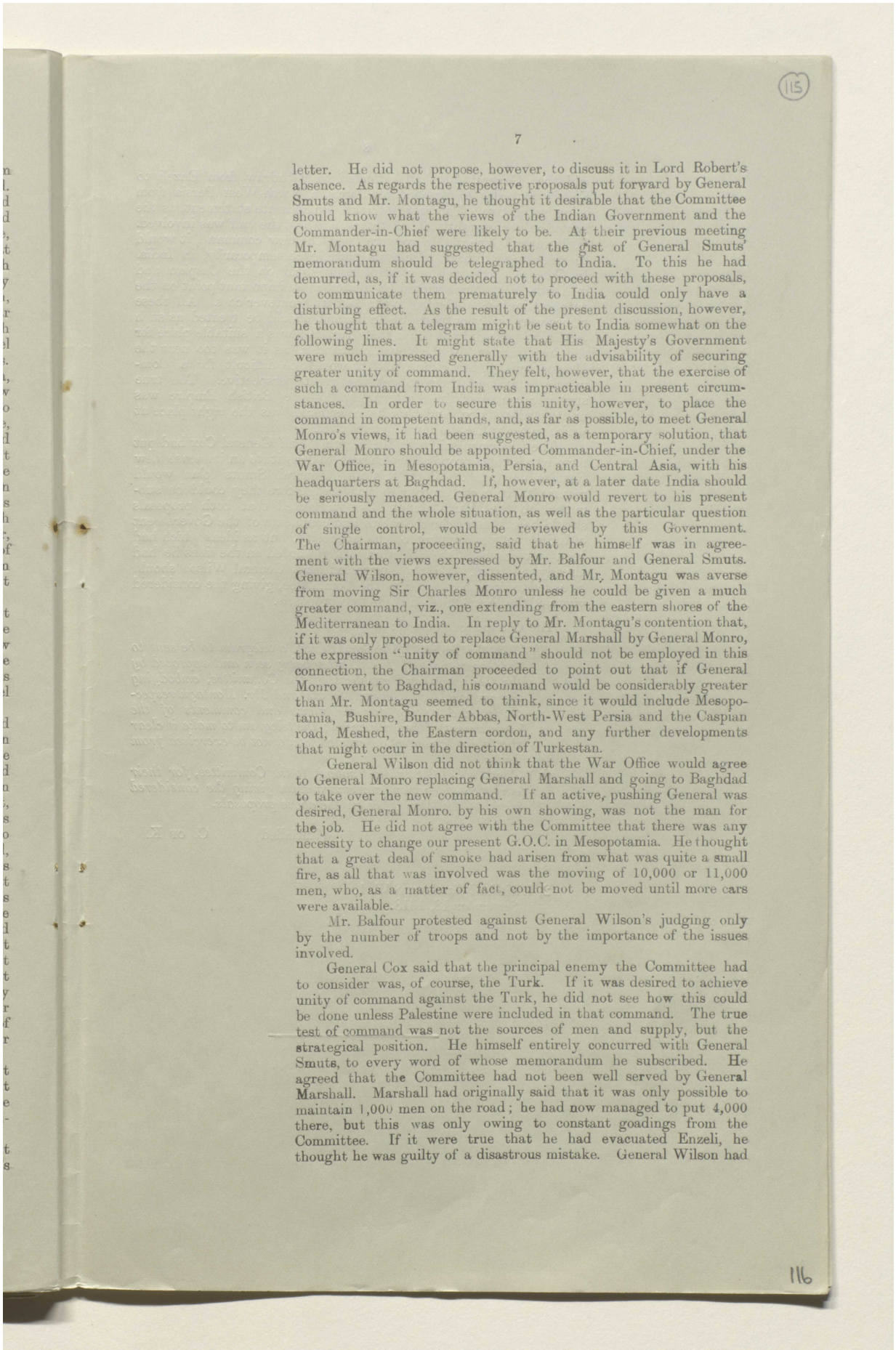

letter. He did not propose, however, to discuss it in Lord Robert's absence. As regards the respective proposals put forward by General Smuts and Mr. Montagu, he thought it desirable that the Committee should know what the views of the Indian Government and the Commander-in-Chief were likely to be. At their previous meeting Mr. Montagu had suggested that the gist of General Smuts' memorandum should be telegraphed to India. To this he had demurred, as, if it was decided not to proceed with these proposals, to communicate them prematurely to India could only have a disturbing effect. As the result of the present discussion, however, he thought that a telegram might be sent to India somewhat on the following lines. It might state that His Majesty's Government were much impressed generally with the advisability of securing greater unity of command. They felt, however, that the exercise of such a command from India was impracticable in present circumstances. In order to secure this unity, however, to place the command in competent hands, and, as far as possible, to meet General Monro's views, it had been suggested, as a temporary solution, that General Monro should be appointed Commander-in-Chief, under the War Office, in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia, with his headquarters at Baghdad. If, however, at a later date India should be seriously menaced. General Monro would revert to his present command and the whole situation, as well as the particular question of single control, would be reviewed by this Government. The Chairman, proceeding, said that he himself was in agreement with the views expressed by Mr. Balfour and General Smuts. General Wilson, however, dissented, and Mr. Montagu was averse from moving Sir Charles Monro unless he could be given a much greater command, viz., one extending from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to India. In reply to Mr. Montagu's contention that, if it was only proposed to replace General Marshall by General Monro, the expression "unity of command" should not be employed in this connection, the Chairman proceeded to point out that if General Monro went to Baghdad, his command would be considerably greater than Mr. Montagu seemed to think, since it would include Mesopotamia, Bushire, Bunder Abbas, North-West Persia and the Caspian road, Meshed, the Eastern cordon, and any further developments that might occur in the direction of Turkestan.

General Wilson did not think that the War Office would agree to General Monro replacing General Marshall and going to Baghdad to take over the new command. If an active, pushing General was desired, General Monro, by his own showing, was not the man for the job. He did not agree with the Committee that there was any necessity to change our present G.O.C. in Mesopotamia. He thought that a great deal of smoke had arisen from what was quite a small fire, as all that was involved was the moving of 10,000 or 11,000 men, who, as a matter of fact, could not be moved until more cars were available.

Mr. Balfour protested against General Wilson's judging only by the number of troops and not by the importance of the issues involved.

General Cox said that the principal enemy the Committee had to consider was, of course, the Turk. If it was desired to achieve unity of command against the Turk, he did not see how this could be done unless Palestine were included in that command. The true test of command was not the sources of men and supply, but the strategical position. He himself entirely concurred with General Smuts, to every word of whose memorandum he subscribed. He agreed that the Committee had not been well served by General Marshall. Marshall had originally said that it was only possible to maintain 1,000 men on the road; he had now managed to put 4,000 there, but this was only owing to constant goadings from the Committee. If it were true that he had evacuated Enzeli, he thought he was guilty of a disastrous mistake. General Wilson had

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said that General Marshall intended to withdraw from Enzeli to Kasvin in order to prevent his force in North-West Persia from being cut in two. This was not quite an accurate statement, as the loss of only one-eighth of his troops, and not the half was involved. If, however, General Monro were given the new command, it would be exceedingly difficult to fill his place, even temporarily, in India. In General Cox's view, every place we held on the Caspian and in North-West Persia should be treated as an important point on the outpost line and defended to the last at whatever cost. All these places were really outposts of India and should be treated as such tactically. He did not think that Baghdad was a suitable place for the headquarters of the new Commander, as it was too near the Mesopotamia fighting line, and it would be difficult for a Commander stationed there to get the right perspective. The true strategic centre of the Eastern part of the British Empire was undoubtedly Cairo, and this he considered was the right place at which to centralise the new single control.

The Chairman said that Mr. Montagu and General Cox had put forward a serious proposal, which was to constitute an immense new Eastern command. Both this and General Smuts' plan would require to be more thoroughly explored before they could be submitted to the War Cabinet. He suggested that both proposals should be submitted for the views and comments of the Government of India, not as carrying official authority, but as ideas which had been put forward, the telegram being worded on the lines he had already indicated. He also suggested that General Wilson should be asked to furnish a paper to the Committee, giving the considered views of the War Office on these two proposals.

The Committee decided :—

(a.) *That the India Office should draft a telegram to be sent to the Government of India, after being seen and approved by the Chairman and members of the Committee, embodying the proposals of General Smuts and Mr. Montagu respectively, and asking for the views and comments of the Government of India thereon; the telegram to make it clear that a single control, if created, could not be exercised from India.*

(b.) *That the C.I.G.S. should submit to the Committee, for their early consideration, a memorandum giving the considered views of the War Office on the above proposals.*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
September 18, 1918.

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APPENDIX (A).

C.-in-C., India, to War Office.—(*Despatched at* 7 P.M., *August* 21, 1918. *Received at* 5 A.M., *August* 23, 1918.)

(66078 M.O. 1.)

REFERENCE your 62092 dated 12th July.

Operations 1. Owing to the rapid change being undergone by the strategical situation both on the Western front and in the Caspian areas, I consider it desirable to place before you a further expression of my views on the policy to be adopted in the Eastern theatres.

2. You stated in your above-quoted telegram that you anticipated:—

(*a.*) That Marshall could rely on carrying out his policy uninterrupted by enemy, but subject to limitations imposed by distances and transport problems.

(*b.*) That Germany will make no serious military effort in Asia until her main effort in Europe is either suspended or collapses.

(*c.*) That our safest course is to adopt a bold policy in the East.

3. Though I am necessarily ignorant of the resources of the belligerents in material and personnel, the recent successes of the Allies on the Marne and near Amiens point to the initiative passing into our hands, and it seems possible that the result of this season's campaign in the West, coupled with the rapid development of the American army in efficiency and numbers, may be a general withdrawal and shortening of the German line and suspension of the latter's main effort in Europe. The conditions which in your telegram you postulated as antecedent to a serious military effort by Germany in Asia will in that case have been realised, and we must take stock of our capacity to deal with the strategical situation which may arise in consequence in the East. It seems to me also possible that the Allied command may decide that an attempt to force the German line on the Western front may be too costly an undertaking, and that it would consequently be a wiser policy, while holding the Germans in the West, to select a theatre where German Eastern ambitions can be stifled effectively. I note in this connection that you consider that both Turkish and German penetration in Trans-Caspia or Caucasus is primarily economic and not military, and it appears to follow that a check to their schemes in those areas would hasten their economic downfall.

4. On the assumption that the war will continue in 1919, and that the strategical centre of gravity may be transferred eastwards, for the reasons above stated, I desire to submit for consideration my views as to the possibility of developments and the measures which should, in my opinion, be taken to meet them.

5. I consider, in the first place, that the present diffusion of responsibility and duality of control gravely impeding our decision and effective action both military and political. There seems to be ample evidence of the strength which has accrued to the Allied armies in Europe by the adoption of the principle of the united command.

It surely follows that united command and control are as equally desirable in the East. Many instances where united command would have ensured more promptitude of action and the adoption of a policy more in harmony with stategical requirements could be cited. It will suffice to take as illustration of the situation in Central Arabia and in Persia.

In Central Arabia present serious differences between Bin Saud and King Hussein are aggravated by division of authority on which each party trades.

In Persia we have the Minister at Teheran, Marshall, Cox, Malleson, Dunsterville, and the Government of India all having a voice in guiding policy and suggesting actions.

The result has been confusion of policy and delays in decision which threatened recently to involve us in serious trouble from the Gulf to Caspian. For a multiplicity of counsels does not tend to promote united thought and policy.

I therefore consider that efficiency would be largely increased were the forces in theatres east of Suez formed into one group for military command and political control. It would no doubt be preferable if Egypt could also be included, but the many delicate international questions connected with that theatre presumably preclude such an arrangement. The military situation in the East, however, even with Egypt excluded, indicates the need of a centralised control from which the strength of the forces in Persia and Mesopotamia and India can be despatched, and the size and location of a

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central reserve determined. In order to envisage the eastern strategical situation as a whole it is necessary that the headquarters should be accessible to the various theatres, so that decisions may be based on periodical visits by the Commander or his Staff. I suggest that London is too remote to permit of such central control being exercised from there. It seems to me to follow that control must be centralised in India.

6. In the second place, and apart from the question of an Eastern Command, great advantages would result from creating one North Persian Command immediately subject to India. Under such a scheme Malleson and Dunsterville would both be placed under this command, and would no longer be under the direct control of myself and Marshall respectively.

7. Thirdly, should Germany decide to attempt a fresh menace to our Eastern Empire there is a choice of various immediate objectives. For instance, she may decide to strike at our most vital point, namely, the Suez Canal. She may attempt to retake Baghdad. She may aim at securing Baku, the key of the Caspian, and the mainspring of the Transcaspian railway, from which she could threaten the security of India by stirring up trouble in Afghanistan and on our frontiers.

In your telegram of the 12th July you state that enemy will spare no effort to incite Afghanistan to hostility against us, and with this view I agree. Enemy's ultimate object, whatever line of attack she may decide upon, will, as you recognise, be to embarrass India as being the reservoir in the East of men and supplies, and thus prevent us from maintaining our forces in Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Salonika, which are in the main dependent on us.

Even if Germany does not contemplate serious aggression in any of these directions, it would be sound economy, strategically and politically, for her to make a demonstration in force with the objects of immobilising our forces, preventing possible discouragement or even defection on the part of the Turks, and preparing for post-war commercial rivalry.

8. Of the possible objects I can form no definite opinion as to which would be most probable to commend itself to the enemy. It seems to me, however, that the safest course is to check any possible enemy advances as far west as practicable, and that it would be better to deny enemy access to Baku and the western (three groups omitted) close proximity to Afghanistan. This view seems to be in accordance with the policy of His Majesty's Government, which aims at denying the enemy access through North-West Persia, and with the importance which in your telegram you attach to our obtaining control of the Caspian. Meshed becomes a strategic centre of great importance if, however, it is impracticable to check the enemy approach to Transcaspia.

9. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the ample railway communications leading to the East which are at the disposal of Germany, and on our very backward condition in this respect. It is for this reason that we urged in the first instance the necessity of projecting the railway line to Mirjawa, and we now ask with equal insistence that the railway should at once be extended northwards from Mirjawa (one group undecipherable), Birjand, and Meshed. We believe this extension would be welcomed rather than resented by Amir of Afghanistan. It accords more or less with the scheme he propounded to Kabul Mission in 1904 for defence of Afghanistan against Russia; and as we have now ample (one group undecipherable)s that Amir is pledged to oppose by force any Turco-German troops attempting to enter Afghanistan, he will welcome any measures on our side calculated to prevent such entry. . . . I observe that you anticipate that we should receive ample notice of any German-Turco movement towards our frontiers. I wish to emphasise that, in view of our present deplorably inadequate communications, ample notice means a very long period, probably not less than a year. Our force in North-East Persia is not susceptible of expansion beyond its present insignificant strength, owing to the primitive conditions of our communications. The maintenance even of this small force makes most extravagant demands on animal transport, which we cannot spare from the north-west frontier, and yet a display of British strength in that region would have far-reaching political and military consequences.

10. We have already informed you that we shall require until the end of December the whole of Tatas' output of rails. Apart from the requirements of the Mirjawa extension, we shall probably require large quantities of rails for sidings, &c., in connection with the north-west frontier mobilisation scheme. I cannot too strongly emphasise also the seriousness of the railway situation in India. Freeland has now examined the position and fully realises our deficiencies in rails, locomotives, &c. His considered opinion entirely confirms our view of the situation as reported in our telegram of the 8th March, and this situation, owing to the prospects of a partial failure of the

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monsoon and the consequent need for heavy internal movements of foodstuffs, will be even graver than anticipated.

11. To sum up—

(*a.*) There seems to be indication that Germany may attempt in the course of 1919 or earlier further aggression in the East.

(*b.*) The control of policy and strategy in the eastern theatres should be centralised in India, subject of course to orders of His Majesty's Government, and there should be unity of command in North Persia.

(*c.*) The best method of checking a German advance, having as its objective the frontiers of Afghanistan with the consequent menace to the safety of India, would be to obtain control of North-West Persia and the Caspian.

(*d.*) Failing this course, it is absolutely necessary that we should be in a position to exercise strong military pressure from Meshed.

(*e.*) This demands the extension of the railway northwards from Mirjawa.

APPENDIX (B).

C.I.G.S. to C.-in-C., India.

(*a.*) I welcome the clear expression of your views conveyed in your telegram No. 66078, 21st August.

(*b.*) Your paragraph 3. It appears probable that Germany may seek to shorten her line in the West so that she may be able to dispose of a large reserve. Where these reserves will be employed is, however, a matter of doubt. It is certain they will be required on the Western front as soon as operations commence next year, and it is consequently only during the four or four and a half months from the middle or end of October to the beginning of March that they can be employed in any other theatre. This period is too short to enable any large force to be transported to Trans-Caspia, engaged there, and brought back to France.

(*c.*) Your paragraph 5. A very similar proposal was minutely examined in August by War Cabinet Committee. Arguments almost identical with those adduced by you were carefully considered, but a proposal to depart from the present arrangements for military control was unequivocally withdrawn on realisation of the interdependence of all theatres in this war, and that unity of command as proposed by you in the East could only be attained at the sacrifice of unity of direction of strategic resources of the Empire as a whole. It was fully appreciated that such direction is dependent upon the continuance to afford me in your sphere the loyal co-operation which I have always received in the past, and which I know I can count on for the future.

(*d.*) Your paragraph 6. I am in favour of the formation of a Caspian Command to include all troops on the Caspian littoral and North-West Persia, but it appears essential that this command should be under Marshall, who should decide its actual composition and sphere of action, for its operations will be carried out by troops found from General Marshall's command, of which it will be an integral part. Malleson's command is affected to a relatively small extent and is, therefore, excluded from the proposed Caspian Command.

(*e.*) Your paragraph 7. I agree that Germany might prefer the attempt to secure control of the Caspian with a view to threatening Afghanistan and India. We must, however, avoid playing the enemy's game by allowing our stratagy to be diverted from its true course by a German demonstration in Trans-Caspia, and should bear in mind the conflict between German and Turkish interests.

(*f.*) Your paragraph 8. I agree that it is desirable to check any possible enemy advances as far West as practicable, but the development of the Caspian situation has shown clearly that owing to our undeveloped communications we cannot depend yet upon direct intervention from the Persian Gulf. Any intervention from this direction must take the form of a flank attack from the Shatt-ab-Arab against the enemy right, and until such an attack has had time to develop systematically, India must be prepared to hold her own frontier in addition to maintaining internal security. Whether Afghanistan is to be mobilised now as an advanced post or to be left to show her colours on the appearance of the Turks on her frontier is, I consider, a question purely for the consideration of the Indian Government. But it is the knowledge that India is able to hold her own front (in addition to continuing to find drafts for other theatres) which

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will give us the power to maintain the initiative which, if we have not temporarily lost, we have been perilously near losing in the Caspian theatre.

(*g.*) Your paragraph 9. The extension of the Nushki railway to Mirjawa has undoubtedly proved of the greatest value, but with the present acute shortage of rails, I consider that any extension beyond that already sanctioned is inadmissible. Even the extension to Neh (requiring eight months for completion) would still not enable you to maintain any considerable force on the Russo-Persian frontier. On the other hand, every mile of railway extension along the Khanikin–Kermanshah route is having an almost immediate effect on the Caspian situation, while a comparatively short railway extension up the Tigris would facilitate operations which might deprive the Turks of their initiative in North-West Persia.

(*h.*) Your paragraph 10. India shares her railway difficulties with all the belligerent countries of Europe, and this situation cannot be remedied while all available material is required for the prosecution of the war; but speaking generally, I regard strategic railways for North-West frontier mobilisation as of greater importance than the Mirjawa extension.

(*j.*) Your paragraph 11. (*a.*) Agree. (*b.*) Has already been considered and found unsuitable. (*c*), (*d*), and (*e*). It is, and will remain, impossible for us to exercise strong military pressure from Meshed. It must therefore be recognised that should India be seriously threatened the main line of defence must be established on the North-West frontier of India and not on the Russo-Persian frontier. The further extension of the Mirjawa railway is inadmissible owing to shortage of material, and even were this not so, it would prove ineffective within such a time as it is necessary to consider.

APPENDIX (C).

The Military Command in the Middle East.

Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Smuts.

I regard the military situation in the Middle East as very unsatisfactory. While on all other fronts we are holding or driving back the enemy, his advance in the Caucasus, Trans-Caspia, and North-West Persia continues. And this is a matter which in a very special degree concerns the British Empire and its future in Asia. If the enemy reaches Central Persia and Afghanistan next summer, a situation might arise on the Indian frontier which would cripple our military effort from Palestine and Salonica to Central Asia.

From this point of view our holding of the Baghdad–Hamadan–Enzeli line and denial of the Caspian to the enemy is a matter of cardinal importance. Baku is almost certain to be lost, but that does not mean the loss of the Caspian. If we can hold on to Enzeli and Krasnovodsk and obtain control of, at any rate, a portion of the Caspian fleet, while our friends in Russia hold Petrovsk and Astrakhan, an enemy advance across the Caspian and towards the centre of Persia and the border of Afghanistan will be prevented. Once this situation is definitely stabilised, a blow might be struck against the Turks at Mosul which would have far-reaching results.

The misfortune is that our commanders in that area are either incompetent, or will not or cannot grasp the situation. Dunsterville was sent to Baku to obtain control of the Caspian fleet, but his efforts have mostly gone to waste in another direction. General Marshall, again, good military commander as he is, does not seem to realise the larger and wider strategy of the enemy, which has denuded his Tigris front of troops and is outflanking his whole position in Mesopotamia by a great movement to Persia and Trans-Caspia. His eyes are kept unmovably fixed on the Tigris front, which has for the moment lost all importance. He has been most dilatory in moving troops towards the Caspian, and he now proposes to withdraw his troops from Enzeli westwards in order to meet the Turkish menance from the direction of Tabriz. If Enzeli is evacuated we could not hope to hold out at Krasnovodsk, and the Caspian route will fall completely under enemy control and the menace to Afghanistan will at once become serious. General Marshall has all along exaggerated his transport difficulties. At first he could only maintain 1,000 infantry on motor cars; later he found he could maintain an

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infantry brigade, and I am under the impression that he has not grappled seriously with the situation, just because he does not realise our dangers in that area and the strategy to be followed.

The Government of India, realising the grave dangers and the necessity for a unified command over that vast area, has proposed that the conduct of operations shall be put under the control of the Commander-in-Chief in India. This the War Office could not, for good and sufficient reasons, agree to. But I feel sure unity of command in the Middle East is necessary, as all moves and operations in Mesopotania, Persia, and Turkestan will henceforth be interdependent. This command should, however, remain direct under the War Office. The solution I would propose is the following:—

I have been struck for months now by the insight which Sir Charles Monro has shown into the military situation in that vast theatre. His judgments have been mostly sound and sure, while those of General Marshall have inspired me with no confidence. I would suggest that Sir Charles Monro vacate his position as Commander-in-Chief in India and be given the entire command from Baghdad to Meshed. As Commander-in-Chief in India should be appointed a man who will work in close harmony with him. For General Marshall another suitable sphere of work should be found; I do not think he has the strategic mind to cope with the situation now developing in the East. Events are moving fast, and whatever is done should be done quickly.

(Initialled) J. C. S.

September 16, 1918.

APPENDIX (D).

Copy of a Letter from Lord R. Cecil to Mr. Balfour.

My dear Arthur, *Gale, Chelwood Gate, Uckfield, September* 15, 1918.

I am very uneasy about the direction of our military affairs in the Middle East. At present the chief authority is the General Staff here. It acts through Marshall who is at Baghdad—not much nearer to the Persian and Trans-Caspian operations than we are. He in turn acts through Dunsterville, who is at present shut up in Baku. No doubt some officer is in charge of operations in North-West Persia, though I don't know who he is. Meanwhile, the Commander-in-Chief in India has apparently the right to give general advice in Baghdad and Persia without going through the General Staff here. How far he is subject to the Indian Government I do not know. Beyond the Caspian things are, if possible, worse. Krasnovodsk is sometimes under Dunsterville and sometimes under Malleson. I really do not know which at the present moment. Malleson takes his orders from the Government of India. I do not know how far his command extends. Does he control Meshed or Mirjawa? How far East does his authority reach? Kashghar is, I gather, certainly beyond him.

In Persia there is an even more complex situation. The North-West is under the War Office; Teheran, being controlled by Persian forces, is under the influence of Marling and therefore of the Foreign Office. Colonel Haig, at Ispahan, is an Indian official. I am not sure whether he has any direct military authority. Sir Percy Sykes is also an Indian official and commands the South-Persian Rifles. Who commands the Indian troops? I am not sure. There was some talk of a Brigadier, but I doubt if he materialised. Then there are troops (I think) at Bunder Abbas, and a small expedition going up towards Shiraz from Bushire. The latter are, I understand, under the command of General Douglas who is, I think, but am not sure, an officer of General Marshall's force. If I have read the telegrams rightly his force, should it be unopposed, would or might cease to be regarded as a military contingent and would become a police force and would then be under the direction of the Political Officer at Shiraz, that is, of the Indian Government.

I may have exaggerated the confusion of authority, for I am writing without means of reference. But I am sure that substantially I am right. On the top of all comes the Eastern Committee, meeting once or twice a week and feeling itself competent to decide such questions as to whether General Dunsterville should be continued in his command, and should Baku be held or abandoned.

Finally, there is the Admiralty, not a member of the Eastern Committee at all, which directs through Captain Norris the operations on the Caspian which, apart from other things, constitutes a vital link in our military communications.

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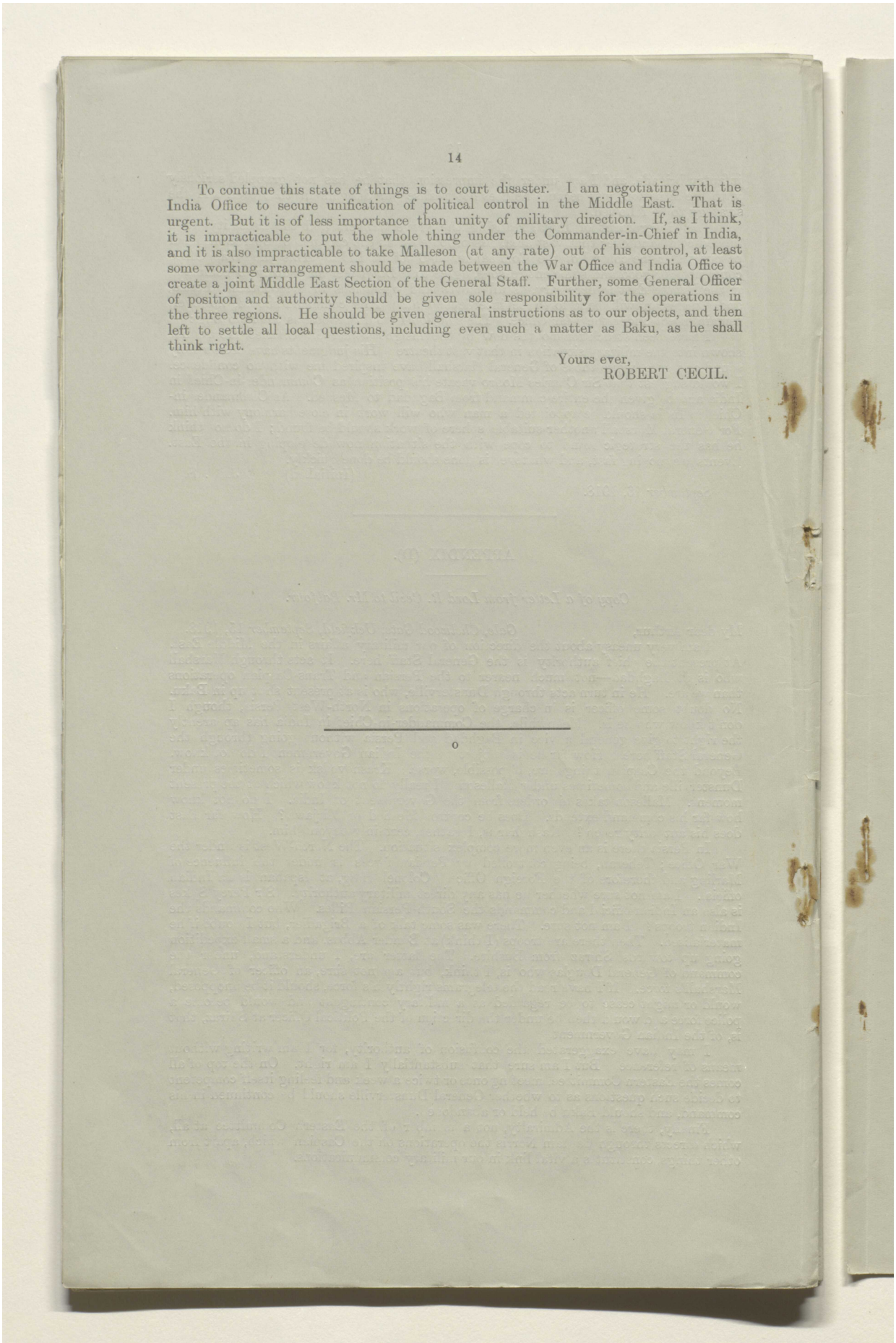

To continue this state of things is to court disaster. I am negotiating with the India Office to secure unification of political control in the Middle East. That is urgent. But it is of less importance than unity of military direction. If, as I think, it is impracticable to put the whole thing under the Commander-in-Chief in India, and it is also impracticable to take Malleson (at any rate) out of his control, at least some working arrangement should be made between the War Office and India Office to create a joint Middle East Section of the General Staff. Further, some General Officer of position and authority should be given sole responsibility for the operations in the three regions. He should be given general instructions as to our objects, and then left to settle all local questions, including even such a matter as Baku, as he shall think right.

Yours ever,
ROBERT CECIL.

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Lord Curzon (119)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. *October* 1918.

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E.C. 33rd Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, September 26, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The following also attended:

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Persia: Financial Assistance.

1. Mr. Keynes informed the Committee that the present financial situation in Persia was undoubtedly serious. The whole question was to be examined by a departmental conference, which was to meet later that afternoon at the Treasury. It was evident from the Commander-in-chief's telegram No. 76401 (E.C.-1701) of the 23rd instant that India was fully alive to the gravity of the problem of financing our various operations in the Middle East. Apart from the difficulty of finding currency for North-West Persia, there was the certainty of a greatly increased demand being made on the resources of the Imperial Bank, in order to finance East Persian operations, and in connection with the railway extension from Mirjawa, and the improvement of communications generally. A telegram from Sir P. Cox, No. 830, of the same date, stated that the cash reserves of the bank in Persia were 5,573,000 tomans, of which 545,000 were in transit and at the mint, while the liabilities were 3,963,000 tomans notes in circulation, and 5,755,000 other liabilities. The position depended entirely on trade, which was almost at a standstill,

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owing to inevitable restrictions and demands made upon private land transport. The Treasury were still awaiting replies to a question put in two very important telegrams, which had been sent a week or two previously, notably one to General Marshall.

The Committee were impressed with the gravity of the situation, and—

(a.) *Requested Mr. Keynes to communicate to members of the Committee, through the Secretary, the result of the conference that afternoon.*

(b.) *Authorised the Secretary of State for India to send to India a telegram pointing out the necessity of releasing at once, for trade purposes, transport in the south of Persia which had been temporarily commandeered for military use.*

(c.) *Decided that the question should be discussed again by the Committee as soon as intimation was received from Mr. Keynes that his Department was in possession of the required information.*

(Mr. Keynes withdrew.)

Ibn Saud.

2. The Committee had before them a note by the Political Department, India Office, upon our relations with Ibn Saud (E.C.-1648) (Appendix I), and copies of the most recent telegrams on the subject.

The Chairman said that the situation had changed since the question had last been discussed by the Committee (E.C. 30th Meeting, Minute 7). Our recent policy had been to dissuade Ibn Saud from attacking Ibn Rashid, and we had sought to divert his activities against the Ajman. In the India Office note three recommendations were made:—

(i.) That as regards the proposal to arrange a meeting between representatives of Ibn Saud and King Hussein, a further report should be awaited.

(ii.) That Sir R. Wingate should be invited to depute an officer of the Egyptian Service to succeed Mr. Philby as British representative with Ibn Saud.

(iii.) That the question of supplying Ibn Saud with 1,000 serviceable rifles in substitution of the inferior weapons already delivered to him should be considered.

An important telegram had been received on the subject from the Chief Political Officer at Bagdad (E.C.-1577), warning His Majesty's Government that their refusal to replace the 1,000 rifles was calculated to precipitate a conflagration, as it would disgust Ibn Saud, and alienate him from the sympathy of his adherents. The Chairman said that it seemed that all the authorities at the Eastern end of the line were in favour of our substituting, for the rifles already sent, weapons of an up-to-date pattern, and he himself was inclined to think that this course ought to be adopted.

Lord Robert Cecil reminded the Committee that our pledge of the 9th March, 1918, had been literally fulfilled. We had given Ibn Saud the 1,000 rifles we had promised, but we never stipulated that they should be of the latest type. He himself was afraid that if we replaced these with first-rate weapons they would only be used against King Hussein, who was, at present, in a rather queer state of mind, and prepared strongly to resent any favour shown to his rival. Though Bagdad supported the gift of up-to-date weapons, Cairo was opposed.

General Wilson said that Sir George Macdonogh took the same view as Lord Robert, viz., that really good weapons would be turned against King Hussein. The rifles we had given to Ibn

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Saud were exactly the same pattern as those we had given to other Arabian chiefs.

Mr. Montagu did not think that High Commissioner, Cairo, was against the gift of the rifles. His recollection was that Sir R. Wingate had concurred in the desirability of giving Ibn Saud sufficient rifles to keep him friendly. What Bagdad and he himself feared was that if Ibn Saud did not get the rifles he wanted, he would be so disgusted that he would determine to attack King Hussein. Sir Mark Sykes had suggested to him that it might be desirable to send a telegram to enquire whether our recent successes in Palestine would modify, in any way, the advice which the Chief Political Officer had given us.

Sir Mark Sykes said that, owing to the said successes, Arabia was more or less negligible at the present moment, and was growing more so every day. Every fresh rifle meant potential trouble. We had given Ibn Saud the promised 1,000 rifles, and he was sure that any arms we gave him would sooner or later be turned against King Hussein. Ibn Saud was running the Ikhwan sect, which, in his opinion, had been started by Turkish agents, and there was consequently a great danger of his becoming a Turkish agent himself. Sir Mark said that he himself was against substituting more up-to-date weapons.

Mr. Balfour thought that everything depended upon the exact terms of our original pledge. Whatever our bargain was, it must be carried out. If it could be shown that we had in any way been guilty of sharp practice, we ought to make immediate amends.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That the India Office should telegraph to the Chief Commissioner at Bagdad, pointing out that the* 1,000 *rifles given to Ibn Saud were serviceable, and of the same pattern that we gave to other Arabian chiefs; and that we had consequently fulfilled our promise to him. Before further considering whether rifles of a more up-to-date pattern should be substituted, His Majesty's Government would be glad to know whether recent military events in Palestine affected in any way the advice given in Chief Political Officer's telegram No.* 7710 *of the* 15*th instant* (E.C.-1577).

(b.) *That the question of a meeting between Ibn Saud and King Hussein, or between their respective sons, should stand over for the present.*

(c.) *That Mr. Philby should be allowed to proceed on leave, and that the High Commissioner in Egypt should be invited to depute an officer of the Egyptian Service to succeed him, the India Office and Foreign Office to take the necessary action.*

(At this point General Wilson withdrew.)

The Caspian Situation.

3. The Chairman said that recent information from the Caspian indicated that we have, or had at one time, a considerable amount of shipping in our hands, and that Bicharakof now claimed to control the Caspian fleet. Since the Committee last met, the Admiralty had sent a very strongly worded telegram to the Commander-in-chief, East Indies (E.C.-1664) (Appendix II), and he invited Admiral Hope to give an explanation.

Admiral Hope said that the Admiralty and the War Office had come to the conclusion that our men on the spot did not seem to be fully alive to the enormous importance of securing the Caspian fleet; at any rate, the measures they were adopting to effect this were not vigorous enough for the purpose. In consequence, both Departments decided to telegraph in strong terms to the Commander-in-chief, East Indies, and General Marshall respectively.

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The Chairman thought that the position was rather a difficult one. Drastic orders had been despatched, saying that steps must at once be taken to take possession of the armed Caspian fleet, either by bribing the officers and men, or by purchase. As it now appeared that Bicharakof was in control of the fleet, were these orders to be suspended ?

Admiral Hope said that the situation was naturally affected by whether or not the fleet was really under Bicharakof's control. He did not ask for any decision on the subject from the Committee that afternoon, and suggested that the matter might stand over until replies from the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, and General Marshall had been received. In reply to a question as to whether we had sufficient naval officers and men on the spot to carry into effect the Admiralty's orders, Admiral Hope said that his Department were satisfied that this was the case. More officers and other ratings would, however, be sent up as soon as transport was available.

Policy in Persia.

4. The Chairman said that a long, important telegram, No. 831, dated the 23rd September, had been received from Sir Percy Cox (E.C.-1658) (Appendix III), which asked for the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to certain proposals that had been made by the Persian Government. The telegram stated that the fall of Baku and the retirement of our forces from the Zinjan line had had a very damaging effect on public opinion at Teheran and elsewhere. Vossugh was anxious to maintain the position of the present Cabinet in the existing critical circumstances by attracting moderate democratic elements, and by creating an atmosphere favourable to it by some public announcement of friendly concessions which he had been able to secure from the British. The proposed announcement was:—

1. That Great Britain had categorically reiterated her determination to respect the independence of Persia.
2. That she had undertaken, as soon as a Russian Government which she can recognise is established, to press the abrogation of the Anglo-Russian Convention.
3. That she had consented—
   - (*a.*) To transfer the South Persia Rifles to the direct control of the Persian Government.
   - (*b.*) To the despatch to Teheran of a Commission of neutral officers, preferably Scandinavian, but not Swedes, to draw up a scheme for the formation of a uniform force for Persia into which the present South Persia Rifles would be merged.
   - (*c.*) For the present, the Shiraz South Persia Rifles would be transferred to Firman Firma, who would be allowed to retain a considerable number of British junior officers and other personnel with the force. If this arrangement succeeded, the Kerman brigade should be similarly handed over. It was further to be understood that as soon as the Bushire-Shiraz road was opened up and tranquillity restored, British troops at Fars should be gradually withdrawn.

The Chairman also read a telegram (No. 835) from Teheran (E.C.-1698), referring to the earlier message (No. 831), and stating that the suggestion of Scandinavians, other than Swedes, was made because several Swedes still remained with the gendarmerie, and it was thought that Norwegians or Danes would work in better with them. He agreed with the Director of Mili-

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tary Intelligence, copies of whose note of the 26th September to the Foreign Office (E.C.-1677) had been circulated to the Committee, that Cox's telegram must have been sent before the news of Allenby's victories had reached Teheran. He understood that the War Office had arranged that military news should be regularly communicated to the Chief Commissioner there, and he suggested that the latter should be asked what effect the more favourable situation in Palestine would be likely to have upon Vossugh. The War Office note stated that the General Staff had no objection to the introduction of French-Swiss officers into the South Persia Rifles; they were, however, quite unable to agree to the course of action suggested in the latter part of Cox's telegram. It appeared to them dangerous in the extreme to count upon a Turkish refusal to agree to the evacuation of Persian territory by both belligerents, and the mere presentation of such a note, whether refused or accepted by the Ottoman Government, would seriously embarrass General Marshall. In the view of the General Staff, the aim of British policy in Persia should be an alliance with that country. As regards the transference of control of the South Persia Rifles and the withdrawal of British troops from Fars, the Chairman wondered if our political agent at Shiraz had been consulted in the matter. He thought the Committee were agreed in principle with the proposal to hand this force over, but when this should be done was a delicate matter. It was a serious business to hand over 5,000 armed and more or less trained men to a Persian commander.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the reply to Cox's telegram should be to the effect that we have already agreed to (1) and (2) of his proposals, and as regards (3), we would accept French-Swiss officers, but were doubtful about Scandinavians. As regards the point raised by the Chairman, he thought that Cox would have been certain to have consulted Shiraz, but the point might be brought out in our reply by saying: "You have no doubt consulted Shiraz as to the local effect of these proposals."

Mr. Montagu referred to the Viceroy's telegram of the 21st instant (E.C.-1659), which stated:—

> "We can see no objection to eventual appointment of Swiss officers, provided that they are French-Swiss, on terms proposed by War Office, but we think, in the first instance, it is desirable to make the greatest political capital possible out of the abandonment of the South Persia Rifles by announcing this without stipulation as to subsequent employment of Swiss officers."

Mr. Montagu agreed that all the capital possible should be made out of our surrender of the South Persia Rifles, and thought that a decision about the nationality of neutral officers should be postponed for the present. He reminded the Committee that some time previously when we had instructed Marling to negotiate with a view to putting Vossugh in power, one of the baits held out was the possible surrender of this force. Cox's suggestion was that, before the suggested Commission should arrive in Persia, the Shiraz Brigade should be handed over to Firman Firma, and that, if the experiment was successful, it should be adopted in the case of the Kerman Brigade also. On the whole, he was quite prepared to accept proposals (1), (2), and (3) of Cox's telegram. His policy had always been to get rid of the South Persia Rifles, as he did not think that we needed them, and felt they embarrassed us.

Sir Eyre Crowe pointed out that if we agreed to these proposals, we should be tied to admitting neutral officers into the South Persia Rifles. It was quite clear that one result of the recent severe defeats sustained by the Turks would be that we need not now pay so big a price for a friendly Persian Cabinet.

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He was sure that in later years we would regret the introduction of neutral officers.

The Chairman thought that there was general agreement as to the desirability of getting rid of the South Persia Rifles, or, at least, of British control of it. We also wanted to be able to withdraw our troops from South Persia. If Cox and the local political authorities were satisfied that the South Persia Rifles could be transferred to Firman Firma without disturbing the tranquillity of the country, then our sanction should be accorded. He suggested that the reply to Sir Percy Cox should be that His Majesty's Government were in general agreement with his three first proposals; they were, however, doubtful about the suggested neutral Commission, and would prefer, for the present, to postpone a decision on that point. Before replying to the Persian Government, however, they would like to know if our victories in Palestine had modified Vossugh's claims.

Mr. Balfour enquired whether, supposing we handed over the South Persia Rifles to Firman Firma, we proposed to continue to pay for the force. He understood that we had even been paying neutral officers, who had done us nothing but harm. In his view, the only logical policy to adopt was, so long as we pay the officers, those officers must be British.

The Chairman then referred to the latter part of Cox's telegram, in which it was suggested that after the issue of the proposed communiqué, Persia should at once address draft notes to both belligerents, appealing to them to withdraw their troops from Persian soil, and not to make the heart of Persia the cockpit of their struggle. Turkey would, obviously, refuse to comply, as she could not agree to give up Azerbaijan, and Great Britain, in view of the Turkish attitude, would likewise refuse. The Chairman said that he did not think this at all advisable.

Lord Robert Cecil agreed that the suggestion of draft notes was dangerous. He wished to know, however, what exactly our policy was. Was it (*a*) towards a protectorate, or (*b*) towards an independent Persia?

Mr. Montagu did not agree that the draft notes proposal was necessarily dangerous. Our own intention was to evacuate South Persia as soon as order was restored. We could not, however, evacuate the Kasvin Road, as we are maintaining ourselves there simply in order to keep the Turks out of Persia. Our cordon there was necessary in order to exclude both the Turks and the Germans. He himself differentiated between the maintenance of our cordon on the frontiers of Persia and the maintenance of forces in the interior. The north-west cordon was necessary to exclude the Germans and Turks from Persia; the north-east cordon was necessary to keep them away, possibly, from India. We had, however, in his view, no justification at all for being in Persia. He disliked intensely the present quite untenable and unjustifiable position of being armed in a country with which we were not allied. This could be cured by an alliance on Persia entering the war.

Mr. Balfour said that the point was, to his mind, what *war* measures were really necessary? Supposing the Turks were to withdraw, what guarantee was there that they and the Germans would not return? We could not afford to run any such risk. He pointed out that the suggested draft note made no reference to the Germans.

Sir Eyre Crowe added: "Or to the Russians." As regards Mr. Montagu's point, we were in Persia because the enemy were there.

(Here followed a brief discussion as to whether or not, when the question had last been discussed, the Committee had been in favour of an alliance with Persia, or merely of maintaining her present neutrality).

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Mr. Montagu and Lord Robert Cecil said that, as far as their recollection went, the Committee had pronounced in favour of an alliance.

The Chairman said that his own recollection was quite definitely to the contrary.*

Mr. Balfour said that he would agree to (1) and (2) in Cox's telegram, and he would also agree to handing over the South Persia Rifles. He thought the Committee should definitely not agree to the neutral Commission proposal, or to the suggestions in regard to Turkey and the draft notes.

General Thwaites said that the views of the War Office had been submitted in their note of the 26th instant (E.C.-1657). General Marshall, he understood, was not in favour of an alliance.

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should reply to Cox's telegram in the following sense:—

(a.) *Enquiring to what extent our recent successes in Palestine might have affected the attitude and claims of the Persian Government.*

(b.) *That his reply to* (a) *will be awaited before His Majesty's Government reply definitely to the proposals made in his telegram No.* 831, *but that they are inclined to sanction the issue of a communiqué on the lines of* (1) *and* (2), *and that*

(c.) *As regards* (3), *the attitude of His Majesty's Government is. that they were disposed to hand over the South Persia Rifles to Firman Firma on the terms proposed, provided that Cox and the local political authorities were satisfied that this would be followed by no recrudescence of disorder in South Persia.—*

(d.) *His Majesty's Government deprecated the suggested neutral Commission, at any rate for the present.*

(e.) *His Majesty's Government gravely doubted the wisdom or desirability of the proposed draft notes for various reasons, including the fact that Turkey might not play the rôle assigned to her.*

Persia: Arrest of Obeidullah.

5. With reference to Eastern Committee 32nd Meeting (Minute 1), the Chairman read telegram No. 829 of the 22nd instant (E.C.-1660) from Sir P. Cox, forwarding the text of General Dunsterville's telegram of the 1st instant, which was as follows:—

"I have wired to Baghdad to return Obeidullah Effendi with all possible speed. Will inform you when he arrives and leaves Kasvin."

Cox's comment on this was that Dunsterville was reckoning without his host, but he did not think that Marling could be expected to realise that; he agreed that we could not safely part with Obeidullah if it could possibly be avoided, and he would do his best to reach a satisfactory solution. The Chairman further referred to a note from the War Office, dated the 26th instant, to the Foreign Office (E.C.-1678), stating that, in view of Cox's telegram No. 829 of the 22nd instant, agreeing as to the danger of releasing this notorious enemy agent, General Thwaites assumed that Mr. Balfour would not require the military authorities to take any further action in the matter, pending receipt of information from

* *Secretary's Note*.—This question was discussed at length by the Eastern Committee at their 16th Meeting (Minute 3), in which the views of those who attended the Meeting were briefly given. There was no consensus of opinion and no decision was recorded.

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Sir P. Cox as to the result of his endeavours to reach a satisfactory solution of the questions involved by the arrest of Obeidullah, and the subsequent action taken by Marling.

The Committee agreed—

That no further action on their part was required for the present.

Situation in North-West Persia.

6. The Committee took note of the following papers:—

(*a.*) A note by the Secretary of State for India, dated the 25th September, placing on record occurrences in North-West Persia, on the shores of the Caspian, in regard to the responsibility of control of operations by the authorities concerned, both at home and in Mesopotamia, and reviewing the share taken therein by General Dunsterville and his Mission (E.C.-1675) (Appendix IV).

(*b.*) A paper by the General Staff on the situation in the Caucasus and North-West Persia since the fall of Baku in relation to Bicharakof's request for financial assistance (E.C.-1676) (Appendix V).

The Committee had also before them various telegrams from the G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia (E.C.-1598) (E.C.-1618) (E.C.-1624) (E.C.-1631) (E.C.-1632) (E.C.-1643), and also C.-in-C., India's telegram No. 76129 of the 22nd instant (E.C.-1642).

The Committee agreed—

That no action on their part was required at present.

Syrian Situation.

7. The Chairman said that General Allenby's recent successes in Palestine must have brought his advanced troops close to, if not already beyond, the boundaries of Syria. It therefore seemed opportune for the Committee again to consider the desirability of arriving at a proper understanding with the French Government about the Arabian situation in general. The question had been discussed at their 21st and 23rd Meetings, dated the 18th July and the 8th August respectively. At the 21st Meeting (Minute 3), the Committee decided that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be asked to sound M. Cambon tentatively on the subject of Syria, on receipt of General Allenby's reply. In Minute 1 of the later meeting, it was recorded that the Chairman thought that the proposed agreements required revision; it was obvious that very great care must be exercised in the final drafting of the pronouncements, and he suggested that the Foreign Office should redraft the annexures to Sir Mark Sykes's Memorandum, and that the matter should be brought up again at a future meeting. At the same meeting (Minute 2) the Committee had agreed that it was desirable to arrive at a definite amicable understanding with the French about Arabian questions generally, and that the discussion should be resumed when members were in possession of the Foreign Office revised draft declaration.

The Chairman invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to state what action had been taken by his Department in the meantime, and what further steps it was desirable to take in the present circumstances.

Mr. Balfour said that on the 23rd instant M. Cambon had called upon him and spoken to him about the situation which seemed likely to be created in the immediate future by General Allenby's successes in Palestine. He and M. Cambon had had a conversation of considerable length, in which Sir Mark Sykes, the

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joint author of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, took part. As a result of the interview he had drafted, for M. Cambon's guidance, a brief statement of policy. A record of the conversation and of the statement had been cabled the same evening to our Ambassador in Paris, and copies would be circulated to the Committee. The following day, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had sent a note to the Director of Military Intelligence, saying that he was directed by the Secretary of State to approach him in regard to the international situation which would arise in Syria in the event of the advance of British forces in the direction of Damascus, and copies of this note would also be sent to members at once. Mr. Balfour suggested that the further discussion of the subject should be postponed until members were in possession of these papers.

Lord Robert Cecil reminded the Committee that, at his instigation, Sir Mark Sykes had made elaborate drafts of a proposed agreement with the French. These drafts had since been amended, after being carefully examined by various experts. Our view had been that it should be left to the French to make the first move, and matters had consequently been hung up until Allenby's recent victories.

The Chairman said that he regarded the question as one of the utmost importance. The Foreign Office appeared now to be relying upon the Sykes-Picot Agreement, from which the Committee had hitherto been doing their best to escape.

The Committee decided to resume the discussion at the earliest opportunity after the circulation of the above papers.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.* 1,
September 26, 1918.

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APPENDIX I.

(A.1.) (E.C.-1648.)

RELATIONS WITH BIN SAUD.

(Note by Political Department, India Office.)

1. The recent heavy crop of telegrams on this subject have somewhat obscured the main issues, and it may make for convenience if a statement is placed before the Eastern Committee at this stage dealing comprehensively with the whole question.

2. It is the case, as pointed out in Baghdad telegram of the 15th September, that the recent orders of His Majesty's Government involve some departure from the policy adopted in March last. In his telegram of the 9th March, 1918, Sir P. Cox submitted the following recommendations, which were approved by His Majesty's Government :—

> "We recognise he [*i.e.*, Bin Saud] may not find it possible to undertake operations on such a large scale as to enable him to capture Hail, and our operations are proceeding so well in Syria that we feel that there is no necessity to press him unduly in this connection, but at any rate it is still most important that he should maintain more effective control in Qasim and stop smuggling and put real pressure on Shammar. To this end we are prepared to assist him with 1,000 more rifles, 100,000 rounds, which Mr. Philby will place at his disposal as necessity arises. He may also regard as a gift the advance of two months' subsidy made him by Mr. Philby.
>
> "As regards Hail, I do not consider Ibn Saud is really keen on taking it except in circumstances which make it apparent that he is doing so at our bidding and under our direction. At the same time, should good opportunity arise for his doing so, either by diplomacy or force, with above meagre assistance, I understand there would be no objection to it in principle, either on the part of His Majesty's Government or High Commissioner. If it should come to pass, I think we should be prepared to double Ibn Saud's subsidy or give him good lump sum. I trust general approval will be telegraphed to our proceeding on above lines, and that General Officer Commanding may be authorised to supply rifles."

3. The recent orders, conveyed in the Secretary of State's telegram of the 13th September, laid it down that "Bin Saud should be kept as quiet as possible and should be restrained, if possible, from military activity or aggressive action in any direction"; and that His Majesty's Government were "against increasing his armed strength or encouraging him to attack Bin Rashid at the present juncture." In other words, our attitude towards the Hail expedition has changed from somewhat lukewarm support to actual discouragement.

4. It may well be doubted whether Bin Saud would, in any circumstances, have seriously pressed an offensive against Bin Rashid. But the policy of encouraging him to pursue the project had at least the advantage of diverting his activities from channels likely to bring him into collision with the King of the Hejaz. The enmity between these two Arab chieftains is deep-seated. It reflects many years of rivalry between Mecca and Riadh, aggravated by the personal jealousy between the two men and by the sectarian feud between Sunni and Wahabi. King Husain, apart from personal animosity, appears to be genuinely apprehensive of the spread of the Wahabi movement, of which Bin Saud is the figurehead, in the direction of the Hejaz. This feeling was probably at the back of his recent action at Khurma, which is the immediate subject of dispute with Bin Saud. For the moment the situation is eased. Bin Baud is reported to have found a temporary diversion in the Koweit direction, where the Ajman and other tribesmen are engaging his attention; while the King, probably as a result of our representations, shows a disposition not to force the pace at Khurma. But we cannot count on more than a breathing space, and the trouble between the two chiefs is certain to revive unless some *modus vivendi* can be found between them.

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5. The statement printed as an appendix to this Note shows the line that we have taken with Bin Saud in the matter, and his own attitude towards our efforts to promote reconciliation. The first question that arises is that of the *proposed meeting between the two Chiefs.* King Husain has offered to visit his rival. Bin Saud evidently regards the offer with suspicion, but is prepared to agree to a meeting on certain conditions. Mr. Philby fears that a meeting might lead to conflict rather than reconciliation, and "would on the whole recommend that visit be not encouraged." Sir R. Wingate is strongly of opinion that a meeting between the two principals "could serve no useful purpose," and emphasises the objection of withdrawing King Husain for any considerable period from the personal direction of Hejaz affairs. He is more favourably inclined, however, to an alternative suggestion made by the Foreign Office that an interview should be arranged between one of the King's sons and a brother of Bin Saud, and he is taking steps to sound the King in the matter. The result of these steps may perhaps be awaited.

6. The second question is that of *British representation with Bin Saud.* The Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, has warned us that the result of the refusal of His Majesty's Government to replace the 1,000 unserviceable Winchester rifles presented to Bin Saud may be that Mr. Philby will find his position an impossible one, and that he will be compelled to terminate his mission and leave for the coast. In a subsequent telegram Captain Wilson has suggested that Mr. Philby, whom he regards as having "reached the end of his tether," so far as his mission to Nejd is concerned, should be allowed to proceed on leave, and should be replaced by an officer from Egypt, whose deputation "would allay King Husain's suspicions and put an end to the belief that our Arabian policies are not co-ordinated." In a still later telegram, dealing with future British policy in Arabia as a whole, Captain Wilson recommends that "it should now be ruled that, though the affairs of Bin Saud will continue to be dealt with by His Majesty's Government through Baghdad, henceforward any officer sent to Bin Saud will normally be a selection of the High Commissioner, Cairo, who will be kept for the present fully informed of all developments." Without prejudice to the question of a general ruling on the lines advocated by the Civil Commissioner, the Department ventures to think that there is much to be said for a change of representation with Bin Saud at the present juncture. In the first place, as explained above, the policy which Mr. Philby was sent to Riadh to carry out has been modified, and there seems advantage in making the new departure synchronize with the appointment of a new agent. The latter will be more favourably placed than our present representative, who is deeply committed to the old policy, for giving effect to the revised instructions of His Majesty's Government. Secondly, much benefit might accrue from bringing a "new angle of vision" to bear upon the affairs of Bin Saud. There has been too much of a tendency in the past for the two rival chieftains—Bin Saud and King Husain—to find their respective champions in India and Egypt, and for the whole controversy between them to be reflected in a conflict of view between the two great administrations concerned. It is scarcely to be supposed that this aspect of the case, or the possibility of turning it to advantage, is lost upon the chieftains themselves. The appointment of an Egyptian officer to Riadh would do much to correct these tendencies and to bring it home, both to Bin Saud and to the King, that there is unity in the counsels of His Majesty's Government.

7. Thirdly, there remains the question of the 1,000 *rifles.* The Department is most reluctant to revive a proposal on which the Eastern Committee has twice recorded an adverse decision. But Captain Wilson is strongly of opinion that our refusal to replace the unserviceable rifles may have very unfortunate consequences; it will disgust Bin Saud and will alienate from him the sympathy of his adherents who, even as it is, are "by no means content with the results that have accrued from his espousal of the British cause." The pressure of public opinion, as the Civil Commissioner seems to hint, may even prove strong enough to override Bin Saud's loyalty to ourselves. Captain Wilson also reports that the General Officer Commanding, Baghdad, agrees with him that the replacement of the 1,000 rifles is "expedient in present circumstances." Attention is drawn to General Marshall's view, because it was primarily on military grounds that the recent decision of His Majesty's Government was based. The arguments for and against the supply of the rifles were discussed in a previous Memorandum circulated to the Committee and it is not proposed to recapitulate them here. But it may be recalled that the proposition, as supported by the India Office, involved no *increase* of Bin Saud's

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armament, but merely the substitution of serviceable weapons for the inferior rifles already supplied to him. Bin Saud may have little reason to complain if his demands are rejected on their merits; but we must expect him to feel aggrieved, and even to question our good faith, if, having undertaken to supply him with a certain quantity of arms, we palm off on him weapons of unserviceable quality, and then refuse to make good the deficiency. It is to be feared that the whole transaction will wear an appearance of "sharp practice," which, in dealing with Arabs, it is most desirable to avoid. It may here be remarked that the Civil Commissioner does not support Mr. Philby's proposals for supplying Bin Saud with arms and ammunition on a further considerable scale; and in any case these proposals, which were framed on the assumption that Bin Saud was to be encouraged to operate against Hail, are ruled out by the recent pronouncement of policy by His Majesty's Government.

8. A few general observations may, perhaps, be added. As mentioned above, the indications are that an early collision between Bin Saud and King Husain on the Khurma question need not be anticipated. Probably both Chiefs have taken to heart the warnings of His Majesty's Government. General Allenby's recent victory in Palestine, the full extent of which is uncertain at the time of writing, should have a steadying influence on the whole situation. It ought to remove from Bin Saud's mind any lingering suspicion that he has "put his money on the wrong horse." At the same time, the contribution of the Hejaz forces towards the British success—if it proves to be as considerable as the early reports seem to indicate—will serve to emphasise the view, already plainly enunciated by His Majesty's Government, that King Husain's services and commitments to the common cause are out of all comparison with those of Bin Saud. This does not, of course, mean that we are to disregard the latter's just interests or to fail to carry out the terms of the treaty of December 1915, under which we (1) recognised his sovereignty over certain specified areas, to be delimited "hereafter"; and (2) guaranteed his territories against "aggression by any Foreign Power." But it does mean that we are on firm ground in restraining him from extravagant claims against his rival, and in requiring him to abstain from action likely to create strife and disunion among the Arab peoples.

9. To sum up, the Department ventures to recommend—

(i.) That as regards the proposal to arrange a meeting between representatives of Bin Saud and King Husain, a further report from Cairo should be awaited.

(ii.) That Sir R. Wingate should be invited to depute an officer of the Egyptian service to succeed Mr. Philby as British representative with Bin Saud.

(iii.) That the question of supplying Bin Saud with 1,000 serviceable rifles in substitution for the inferior weapons already delivered to him should be considered.

J. E. S.

India Office,
September 22, 1918.

APPENDIX.

Communication made to Bin Saud.)

(As authorised by Secretary of State's telegram, 15th August, 1918.)

1. We recognise our obligations to use every influence in our power to prevent encroachments upon Bin Saud's territories, but feel that it is impossible to decide upon merits of individual cases until the precise limits of his territories have been discussed and laid down as provided for in the Treaty.

2. King Husain has given us emphatic assurances that his action against the rebel Sheikh Emir Khaled of Khurma is local and is not directed against Bin Saud and that he entertains no hostile designs against the latter.

3. King Husain is writing a friendly letter to Bin Saud, and appears most anxious for a reconciliation, which His Majesty's Government feel would be to the great advantage of both parties and of Arabs in general. King Husain has offered to visit Bin Saud himself with a view to discussing such reconciliation.

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4. His Majesty's Government are prepared to give their good offices to both parties on behalf of such a reconciliation and an amicable adjustment of their outstanding difficulties: but they cannot but feel that the present time of war and stress is unfavourable to a final settlement of complicated questions such as exact delimitation of boundaries.

5. In the meantime, all Arab leaders should combine against the common enemy, and in their dealings with each other should exercise patience and conciliation, and use every endeavour to localise disputes.

6. We will rectify the blockade arrangements in some manner acceptable to Bin Saud, or if unable to do so, will not hold him responsible for leakage of supplies.

7. We will see that Bin Saud's material resources do not suffer by reason of any hostilities undertaken by him on our behalf.

Bin Saud's Reply.

A. With reference to clause 2, he objects strongly to King Husain being allowed to attack Khurma, and points out that, even if he withdrew his own objection, the people of Nejd would not accept the position. He specifically disclaims responsibility if the matter is allowed to go further.

B. As regards King Husain's offer to visit him (clause 3), Bin Saud expresses appreciation and gratitude, and is ready to meet the King; but he doubts whether such an expedition on the part of the latter may not be used as a cloak for the collection of forces with the object of subsequent diversion against Khurma. Bin Saud, therefore, desires the following conditions to be attached to the visit:—

(i.) The King to come with the minimum following necessary to maintain his dignity; and

(ii.) A responsible British officer to accompany him.

APPENDIX II.

(D.vii.) ——— (E.C.-1664.)

TELEGRAM FROM ADMIRALTY TO C.-IN-C., EAST INDIES, REPEATED TO S.N.O., BAGHDAD, FOR COMMODORE NORRIS, 24.9.18.

Our policy regarding gaining control of Caspian fleet does not seem to be clearly understood by Commodore Norris. In consultation with War Office, Admiralty consider that the time for parleying and peaceful bargaining has come to an end and drastic measures must now be taken. Steps should at once be taken, in consultation with Military authorities, to obtain possession of the armed Caspian fleet, either by bribing captains and crews, or by purchase outright. If this can be done all remaining Caspian shipping should be captured or sunk. If these methods fail we must seize all shipping at Enzeli, and after arming a sufficient number of vessels must embark on a campaign of capturing or sinking all Caspian ships, both armed and unarmed, that refuse to work under our orders. The means at your, and Commodore's, disposal seem sufficient for this. The great importance to us and India of the Caspian fleet and shipping renders vigorous and immediate action most necessary. War Office concurs in these views, and are sending similar instructions to G.-O.-C., Mesopotamia, and directing him to give Commodore every assistance. War Office are also asking G.-O.-C., Mesopotamia, to telegraph a definite statement of funds necessary for control or purchase as early as possible.

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APPENDIX III.

(D.iv.) (E.C.-1658.)

PERSIA.

Sir P. Cox to Mr. Balfour.—(Received September 24, 8 A.M.)

Tehran, September 23, 1918.

(No. 831. Urgent.) *(September 23, 11·30 A.M.)*

I HAVE discussed situation very fully and frankly with Prime Minister and Mosrat Dowleh, his principal ally in the Cabinet, at two or three meetings. Following is an epitome of what has passed, and of solution which presents itself to us :—

At outset I should explain that fall of Baku and retirement of our force from there and Zenjan line, respectively, has had very deleterious effect on public opinion at Tehran and elsewhere. It has, moreover, given hostile element an opportunity of revival of violent anti-British propaganda, which brought about considerable run on the Imperial Bank of Persia, and has greatly shaken position of the Cabinet. Although it is difficult to conceive, in view of very favourable trend of operations in Europe, how any intelligent Persian can now dream of entering war on the side of the enemy, yet I am instructed by reliable elements here that, were we to suffer any further set-backs in North-West Persia, the pro-Turk and pro-German factions, stimulated by enemy's propaganda, would undoubtedly turn out present Cabinet and replace it with an extremist one, which would certainly drag the country into the war on the side of the enemy. It is especially considered that if the Turks succeeded in ejecting us from Kasvin and occupying Tehran they would have no difficulty in forcing Persia to come in on their side.

Having previously communicated with General Officer Commanding, Bagdad, I informed Cabinet in strict confidence what force we actually had this side of Kermanshah ; what reinforcements were on the way ; and what more might be expected before the winter sets in. I also informed them that our troops would do their utmost to hold on to Enzeli, Resht, Zenjan, Senneh, and especially Kasvin. On the above premises we discussed pros and cons of Persia coming in on our side or becoming [? more] benevolently neutral, or remaining neutral but secretly benevolent as at present. While asserting their complete readiness to come in if we could put three or even two divisions into the country [group undecypherable] arrived unhesitatingly at the conclusion that, if practical ability of General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, was limited to extent stated by me, it would be dangerous for Persia to come into the war, and she must decide on the policy of neutrality in some form. But it was held that even if it was desired merely to maintain neutrality with moderate and secret benevolence to us, as at present, it would be impossible for present Cabinet to maintain its position in present critical circumstances unless they were enabled to attract moderate democratic elements, and create atmosphere favourable to us by some public announcement of friendly concession which they had been able to secure from us.

By this means they would be able to pose as a "popular" Cabinet.

What they would like to make known if we agree would be :—

1. That Great Britain has categorically reiterated its determination to respect independence of Persia.

2. That she has undertaken as soon as a Russian Government exists which she can recognise to press for abrogation of Anglo-Russian Convention.

3. That she has consented, firstly, to transfer to direct control of Persian Government South Persia Rifles ; secondly, despatch to Tehran as soon as it can be arranged of a commission of neutral officers, preferably Scandinavian, but not Swedes, to draw up scheme for formation of a uniform force for Persia, into which present South Persia Rifles would be merged. Meanwhile, for period of the war, Shiraz South Persia Rifles would be transferred to the control of Farman Farma, who (in accordance with a private understanding between the two Governments) would himself ask and receive permission to retain adequate number of British personnel to administer force. In this connection it is stipulated that such officers should not be so senior (such as Sir P. Sykes or even Colonel Stokes) as to enable critics to say that real control still remained British. In suggested communiqué no mention would be made of South Persia Rifles in Kerman, but there would be understanding between the two

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Governments that, if Fars arrangement succeeded, Kerman should follow suit later on. It is to be understood that as soon as Bushire–Shiraz road has been opened up, and tranquillity restored, British troops at Fars would be gradually withdrawn.

Assuming for the moment that His Majesty's Government would agree to issue of a communiqué on the above lines in order to ensure maintenance of the present Cabinet with a policy of neutrality and a friendly attitude of the Persian people towards Great Britain, we proceeded to discuss precise means by which neutrality and interest of Persia could be best safeguarded.

Following course of action is suggested for consideration:—

After issue of proposed communiqué Persia would at once address [? draft note]s to both belligerents, appealing to them to withdraw their troops from Persian soil, and not to make heart of Persia the cockpit of their struggle. Turkey would obviously refuse to comply, as she could not give up Aizerbaijan, and Great Britain would, in view of Turkish attitude, refuse likewise. Persia would then propose that a [? zone] or topographical boundary (to be selected in consultation with us) should be agreed upon, across which neither [? belligerent] would advance. It is considered attitude of Turkey in the above negotiations is sure to be unfriendly, and thus public opinion will be the more inclined to us, with result that Persian neutrality will become more and more benevolent to us in direction advocated by Government of India.

Two Ministers above mentioned have still to discuss with some of their colleagues and Shah, but are confident of their acquiescence.

In view of actual run on Imperial Bank of Persia, a possibility of further Turkish advance in the near future, either on Enzeli or Zenjan, it will be realised that if present Cabinet is to be [? maintained] communiqué above suggested must be issued without delay. I shall be grateful, therefore, if I can be informed as soon as possible how far course of action above outlined commends itself to His Majesty's Government.

(Repeated to India and Bagdad.)

APPENDIX IV.

(D. 6.) ——— (E.C.-1675.)

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

The following paper is written with a view to placing on record what has occurred recently in North-West Persia and on the shores of the Caspian in regard to the responsibilities of control of operations by the authorities concerned, both at home and in Mesopotamia, and to review the share taken therein by General Dunsterville and his mission:—

I.—*Original Object of Dunsterville's Mission.*

General Dunsterville's original mission did not include the British troops subsequently placed under his command, but was to consist of 100 to 150 officers and 200 to 300 N.C.O.'s.

His orders were to proceed to Tiflis, in the first instance, and the main military objective was to maintain an effective force on the Caucasus front, so as to—

(*a.*) Protect occupied portions of Turkish Armenia;
(*b.*) Prevent the realisation of Pan-Turanian designs; and
(*c.*) By holding as many enemy forces as possible in the Caucasus, and also by helping to cover his right flank on the Persian frontier, indirectly assist Marshall in Mesopotamia.

He was instructed to render every assistance to the Caucasus Government, more especially as regards raising, training, and equipping their military forces.

The intervention of the Jungalis and the Bolsheviks in the neighbourhood of Enzeli, however, prevented him at the start from attaining above objectives.

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II.—*Subsequent Absorption of the Mission into M.E.F.*

W.O. 59064, May 27, 1918.

He and his staff then became an integral part of General Marshall's force, viz., on the 27th May, 1918, and his duties were to assist in securing the Khanikin-Resht road, and eventually to obtain control of the Caspian.

III.—*The Baku Project.*

G.-O.-C. Mespot.'s X. 9257, June 4, 1918.

It very soon became evident that the defence of Baku was of the first importance, and Dunsterville proposed to undertake it. G.-O.-C. Mesopotamia recommended that Dunsterville should be given a free hand as regards sending British troops to Baku under his (G.-O.-C. Mesopotamia's) control.

W.O. 59655 to G.-O.-C. Mespot.

On the 6th June the War Office telegraphed that His Majesty's Government have no objection to Dunsterville "preparing" to send a force to Baku, but, pending further orders, forbade Dunsterville, any British troops, or Bicharakov's troops going there.

Dunsterville's G. 744 to G.-O.-C. Mespot.

On the 8th June Dunsterville telegraphed that he hoped to save Baku, if he could go there and be followed by a British battery and a British battalion as soon as possible.

W.O. 60107, June 13.

On the 13th June War Office telegraphed that there was no objection to despatch of a few officers to report on possibilities of situation, but that despatch of British forces there, or even assurance of armed help, seemed to them both inexpedient and dangerous.

G.-O.-C. Mespot. X. 9597, June 17.

General Marshall, in reply to a telegram from Dunsterville, saying he would again ask for troops if situation proved better than he expected, wired that, except it be ordered by War Office, he did not intend to send him any more troops.

W.O. 60491, June 19.

War Office replied to above that a report should be awaited from the officer who accompanied Bicharakov.

G.-O.-C. Mespot., X. 9706.

The 21st June Bicharakov complained of want of support, and asked that four of our armoured cars might accompany him to Baku. Mesopotamia agreed to this and ordered it.

W.O. 61196, June 28, to G.-O.-C. Mespot.

His Majesty's Government was not satisfied that we were taking full advantage of our opportunities, and that maximum effort was being made towards the Caspian, and definitely ordered Marshall to send as many troops as he could support into North-West Persia.

G.-O.-C. Mespot.'s X. 9897, June 30.

Dunsterville reports a more favourable situation in Baku, and urges more palpable British support to Bicharakov.

G.-O.-C. Mespot.'s, July 4.

Dunsterville again urges despatch of British forces to Baku before situation changed. Marshall reports that his arrangements for collecting transport are nearly complete.

W.O. 62323, July 15.

War Office telegraphed that if, in Marshall's opinion, circumstances render it desirable or possible, with due regard to the safety of the Hamadan-Enzeli road, to send officers to Baku, or to despatch a small force to that place, they would be glad to see it done. They complain of lack of local information.

Mespot.'s X. 365, July 18.

Dunsterville reports that sending officers or troops to Baku involved hostilities against Bolshevist Government there. Marshall expressed opinion that at present the only way for a small force to reach Baku was by consent of its present Government.

Mespot.'s X. 388, July 19.

Reports from Baku indicate public feeling was in favour of British assistance. Marshall reports he has permitted Dunsterville to move one battalion to Enzeli for despatch to Baku, to be followed by a battery.

W.O. 62635, July 20.

Approved the above.

W.O. 62829, July 23, to G.-O.-C. Mespot.

Expresses doubt as to Dunsterville's capacity, and complains that he has sent no useful information, and asks whether, in Marshall's opinion, he should not be replaced.

C.-in-C. India to W.O., 59101, July 27.

Marshall (then in Delhi) did not wish to displace Dunsterville.

Bagdad X. 666, July 29.

G.-O.-C. reports *coup d'état* in Baku, and that new Government want British help, and adds that transports were on their way to Enzeli to fetch our troops.

G.-O.-C. Mespot. X. 960, August 7.

Reports arrival of first detachment of British troops on the 5th August, and that more left Enzeli on the 6th August, and that defence troops at Baku are under five different political organisations, all independent of each other, with no central control; and that oil fields were full of pro-Turkish Tartar workmen.

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The story of the defence of Baku from this date to its fall, on the 15th September, is too well known to need recapitulation here. Its outstanding features are:—

(*a.*) That the British troops under Dunsterville bore the whole brunt of the continuous fighting.

(*b.*) That during the fighting, viz., on the 2nd September, Marshall told Dunsterville he would receive no more reinforcements, and should evacuate the town at once. The War Office agreed with this.

Dunsterville pointed out on the 9th September that with unarmed ships, and under the guns of hostile fleet, evacuation was not possible, and that in his opinion he must stand by the Government, who had decided not to surrender. His Majesty's Government permitted this on the 11th September. The last defensive positions were forced on the 14th, and Dunsterville withdrew his force, after fighting the enemy to a standstill on the night of the 14th/15th September, bringing off all his troops and guns and destroying material he could not move.

Definite orders were issued for his removal from his command by Marshall on the 17th September.

The points that appear to arise out of consideration and study from a chronological point of view of these telegrams are:—

1. That General Dunsterville proposed on the 4th June, 1918, to undertake the the defence of Baku, but that sanction was not given to his doing so until the 15th July, and then only conditionally.

2. It is evident from the War Office telegram of the 28th June to G.-O.-C. Mesopotamia that neither His Majesty's Government nor the General Staff were satisfied that General Marshall had up to that time made as great an effort as was possible towards the Caspian The telegram in question is a very strong one, and specified exactly where they considered General Marshall has failed. It has already been pointed out by the Eastern Committee, both by General Smuts and by General Cox, that General Marshall originally estimated that he would not be able to support more than 1,000 men with motor-cars on the western cordon. This, however, has been gradually expanded until, as we know now, General Marshall has between Khanikin and Enzeli considerably over the strength of a strong war brigade, as well as 3,000 to 4,000 levies and auxiliary troops, who are all presumably supported along the same road. It is perfectly evident, therefore, that General Marshall's original estimate of what the road could support was incorrect, and the inference may fairly be drawn that he was not at first sufficiently in earnest about it to make sure that his information was incorrect. In this connection it is worthy of note that he has within the last week discovered a possible railway alignment to Kermanshah, avoiding the Paitak Pass, and this looks as though the L. of C. problem had not hitherto been investigated as thoroughly as it should have been, considering its immense importance.

3. In the middle of the very difficult and intricate problem of the defence of Baku Dunsterville was ordered to withdraw. It would be hard to realise anything more discouraging to a commander, placed as General Dunsterville was then, with strong hostile forces in front of him and treachery within the town itself, than the above.

4. In the face of all this General Dunsterville finished his adventures by fighting the enemy to a standstill in front of the town, and brings off his troops and guns without loss, in spite of the endeavours of a hostile fleet to prevent him, and contrary to the wishes of the Government he was co-operating with. It is submitted that in effecting this he saved British prestige in that part of the world, and as it could have been saved in no other way. If he had accepted the order sent him on the 2nd September we should have lost caste throughout that part of Asia, and our leaders and troops would have been branded as suffering from "cold feet."

5. The *finale* is that he is relieved of his command 48 hours after his withdrawal from the town he has defended to the last! The only charge against him that appears to me to be borne out at all is that he failed to produce useful information while in charge of his mission. But his difficulties in collecting reliable information were very great. It appears to me to be evident that General Marshall was not in favour of a great diversion of his strength towards the Caspian, and that both he and the War Office looked upon the defence of Baku as a doubtful adventure.

(Initialled) E. S. M.

September 25, 1918.

[365—32]

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APPENDIX V.

(D. 7.) (E.C.-1676.)

THE SITUATION IN THE CAUCASUS AND NORTH-WEST PERSIA SINCE THE FALL OF BAKU, IN RELATION TO BICHARAKOV'S REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

1. *Enemy Strengths.*

The situation in the Caucasus and North-West Persia is shown in the map, of which copies have been circulated to the Committee. The following table summarises the enemy strengths on the various lines:—

On Front.

Turks—
A.—Baku front, 6,000 rifles, with proportion of artillery and other arms and services.
B.—Tabriz-Kuflan Kuh front, 4,000 ditto.
C.—Sakiz-Sain Kale front, 2,000 ditto.

In Reserve.

Batum area, 1,000 rifles, reserve for A, B, or C.
Alexandropol area, 2,000 rifles, reserve for A, B, or C.
En route for Tabriz area, 3,000 rifles, reserve for B.
West of Lake Urumia area, 6,500 rifles, reserve for C or B.
Erivan area, 4,000 rifles, reserve for B or C.

Germans—
In Georgia, 7,000 rifles.

2. *The Situation in Mesopotamia.*

The German lines of communication on the Euphrates have been broken up, showing that any German threat on Baghdad by this unit is unlikely for at least another year.

On the 15th September the 6th Army was informed that it was to receive 10,000 reinforcements, of which 3,400 had been sent already. On the same day the General officer Commanding Eastern Army Group was informed in *clear* Turkish that the Mesopotamian river navigation had grown and would continue to grow, and consulting him about 300,000 skins, which Ali Ihsan required for kelleks. An agent confirmed the despatch of some reinforcements to Mesopotamia, but the *en clair* message is not regarded seriously by the War Office in the lack of confirmation, for the statement that the force in Mesopotamia is likely to be greatly increased is discredited by the recent disbanding of the 6th Division. However, it is probable that the Turks consider the Tigris line as a right flank of the Eastern Army Group, whose front is from the Tigris to the Caspian Sea, and this should be borne in mind in considering the situation discussed hereunder.

3. *The Situation in Persian Azerbaijan.*

Since the fall of Baku the Turkish advance on the Tabriz-Kasvin road appears to have stopped, and the enemy is showing signs of establishing himself on the Kuflan Kuh position, while to the south-west their advanced detachment is at Sakiz. On the 17th August there was still a doubt whether the 4th Army Corps, operating west of Lake Urumia, was to move southwards.

The above dispositions give cause for reflection as to whether the Turks may aspire merely to consolidate a province which is to comprise "Azerbaijan, including the province of Tabriz, which is to have its capital at Baku." Colour is lent to such a theory by the Turkish ultimatum to Persia to choose which side she would join, as neutrality would no longer be recognised, the cessation of declarations that the advance into Persia was merely to help the latter, and the statement in the press that the seat of the Government of the "Persian" province of Azerbaijan has been

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transferred to Baku. It will be noted that the present high-water mark of the Turkish advance corresponds with the frontier of the Persian province of Azerbaijan proper, as shown by a yellow line on the map, and though it would of course be unwise to frame our plans on the above assumption, the situation is being watched carefully from that point of view, bearing in mind that the Turks doubtless hope to include Enzeli in at least a temporary sphere of occupation.

4. *The Caspian Sector.*

On the 20th August Enver ordered five of the seven regiments at Baku to clear up the situation on the south-west coast of the Caspian and to occupy Enzeli; this was to be done after consultation with Khalil, who is commanding the Eastern Group of Armies. In order to facilitate this move the Turks are reported to have occupied Ardabil and moved on Lenkoran and Astara, thus securing the coast road, so as once more to establish communication with the Jungalis. The only opposition that the Turks might encounter is during the march through the Mughan Steppe, but not much store should be set on this, as the Mughan Russians are said to be considering the inadvisability of offering resistance. The distance from Aji Kabul, on the Tiflis-Baku railway, to Enzeli is over 200 miles and the road is poor. It is unlikely therefore that the troops from Baku could reach Enzeli before the 5th October.

5. *North Caucasus.*

The Turks appear to intend leaving only one regiment at Baku, and Enver, on the 20th September, ordered one regiment (three battalions), which was to be brought up to strength, accompanied by a strong force of artillery and machine guns, to clear Derbend and Petrovsk and occupy North Caucasus as far as the Terek River.

In this connection it may be noted that Bicharakov had already, on the 8th September, reported a force of two Turkish battalions and some 3,500 irregulars in the Gunib-Levashtki area, south of Temir Khan Shura.

The above order is in keeping with the known Turkish aspiration for an autonomous friendly Moslem Cis-Caucasia. The sympathies of the Moslems of Daghestan and the Terek country are reported to be with the Turks, and the Germans fear the control of the Grosni oilfields falling into Turkish hands.

6. *The effect of the Allied Successes in Palestine and the Balkans.*

The Turkish conception will doubtless be influenced by Allied successes in Palestine and the Balkans. The former has already had an appreciable effect on the situation in Azerbaijan, for, at the commencement of General Allenby's advance, the 10th Caucasus Division, which was under orders to move to Tabriz, received orders to counter-march to Constantinople. It is as yet too early to say what will be the full effect of the Palestine victory in the Caucasus and North-West Persia, but there can be little doubt that it will ease the situation materially, regarding the potential threat on our communications in the neighbourhood of Kasvin.

7. *The Caspian Fleet.*

The situation of the Caspian fleet is not yet definite, but Bicharakov, who still holds Petrovsk, stated in a letter received on the 21st September that he controlled the fleet, and his statement was confirmed by the British naval liaison officer with the Russian fleet, from whom a message was received on the 23rd September to the effect that the fleet definitely acknowledges Bicharakov's authority, and will obey his orders. On the 20th September also Commodore Norris reported that the majority of the merchant shipping had gone to Enzeli, and probably Krasnovodsk, ships under repair probably remaining at Baku.

Though the above reports regarding the fleet may require confirmation, and Bicharakov's position not be firmly established, there seems little doubt that the majority of the fleet is at present out of reach of the Turks, and this, combined with the withdrawal of the 10th Caucasus Division, appears to the War Office to justify payment to Bicharakov, in accordance with General Officer Commanding Mesopotamia's telegram No. X 2359 of the 20th September.

General Staff, War Office,
September 26, 1918.

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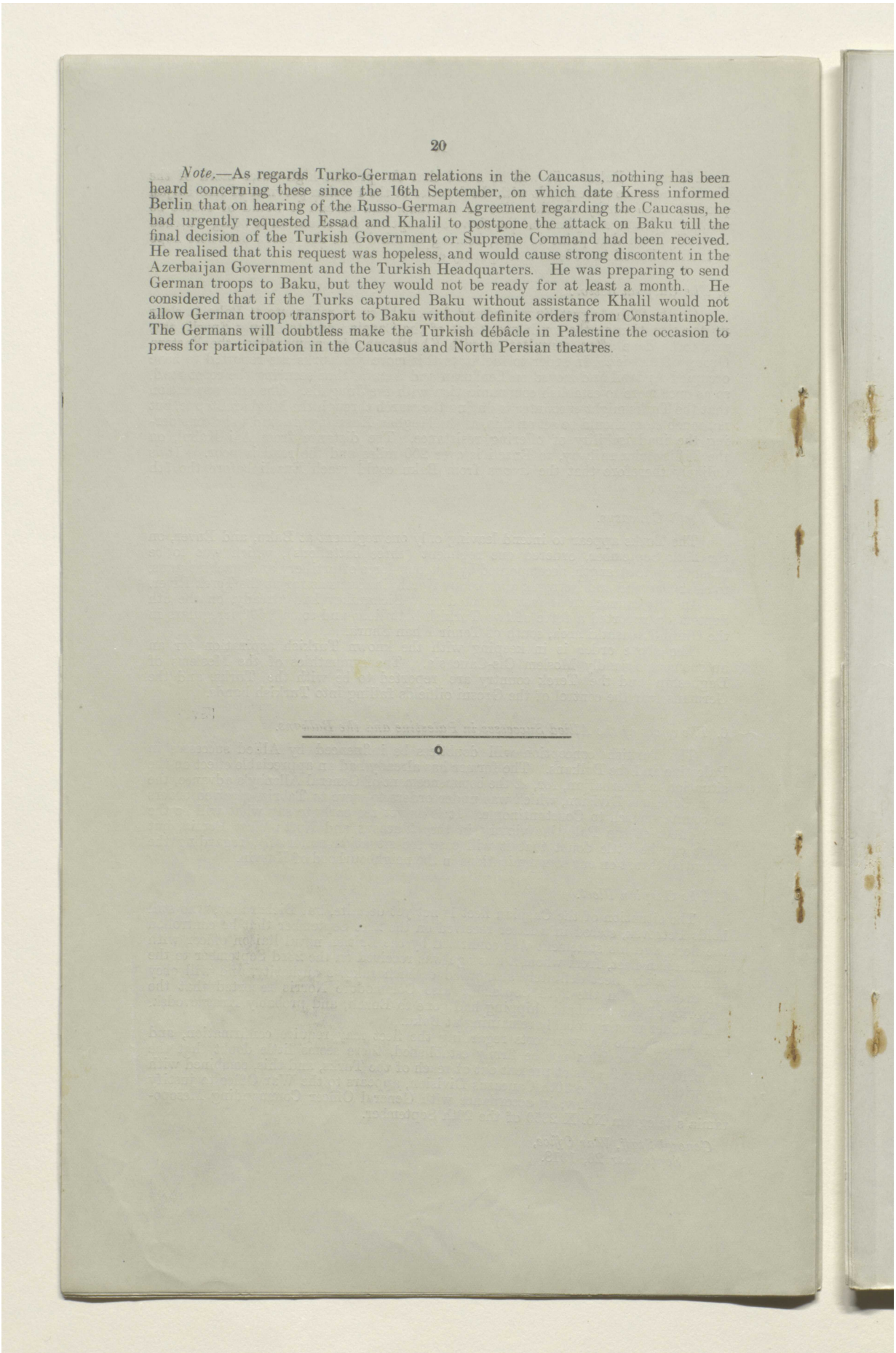

Note.—As regards Turko-German relations in the Caucasus, nothing has been heard concerning these since the 16th September, on which date Kress informed Berlin that on hearing of the Russo-German Agreement regarding the Caucasus, he had urgently requested Essad and Khalil to postpone the attack on Baku till the final decision of the Turkish Government or Supreme Command had been received. He realised that this request was hopeless, and would cause strong discontent in the Azerbaijan Government and the Turkish Headquarters. He was preparing to send German troops to Baku, but they would not be ready for at least a month. He considered that if the Turks captured Baku without assistance Khalil would not allow German troop transport to Baku without definite orders from Constantinople. The Germans will doubtless make the Turkish débâcle in Palestine the occasion to press for participation in the Caucasus and North Persian theatres.

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Lord Curzon (129)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. October 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 34th Minutes. 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, October 3, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The following were also present:

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Lieut.-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Temporary Deputy Secretary*).

Control of Caspian Shipping.

1. The Chairman drew the attention of the Committee to two telegrams from the Commander-in-chief in Mesopotamia (E.C.-1738 and 1756) regarding the situation in the Caspian. Our policy now was to take all those merchant vessels the crews of which were favourably disposed towards us, to arm as many of them as we could with guns which were being sent up to the Caspian for the purpose, and thus create a new Caspian fleet at our own disposal. It was very important that this new naval force should commence operations as soon as possible, especially at the Volga mouth.

Lord Robert Cecil said he gathered that the first ship would be armed by the 6th October, after which date we might look for further developments.

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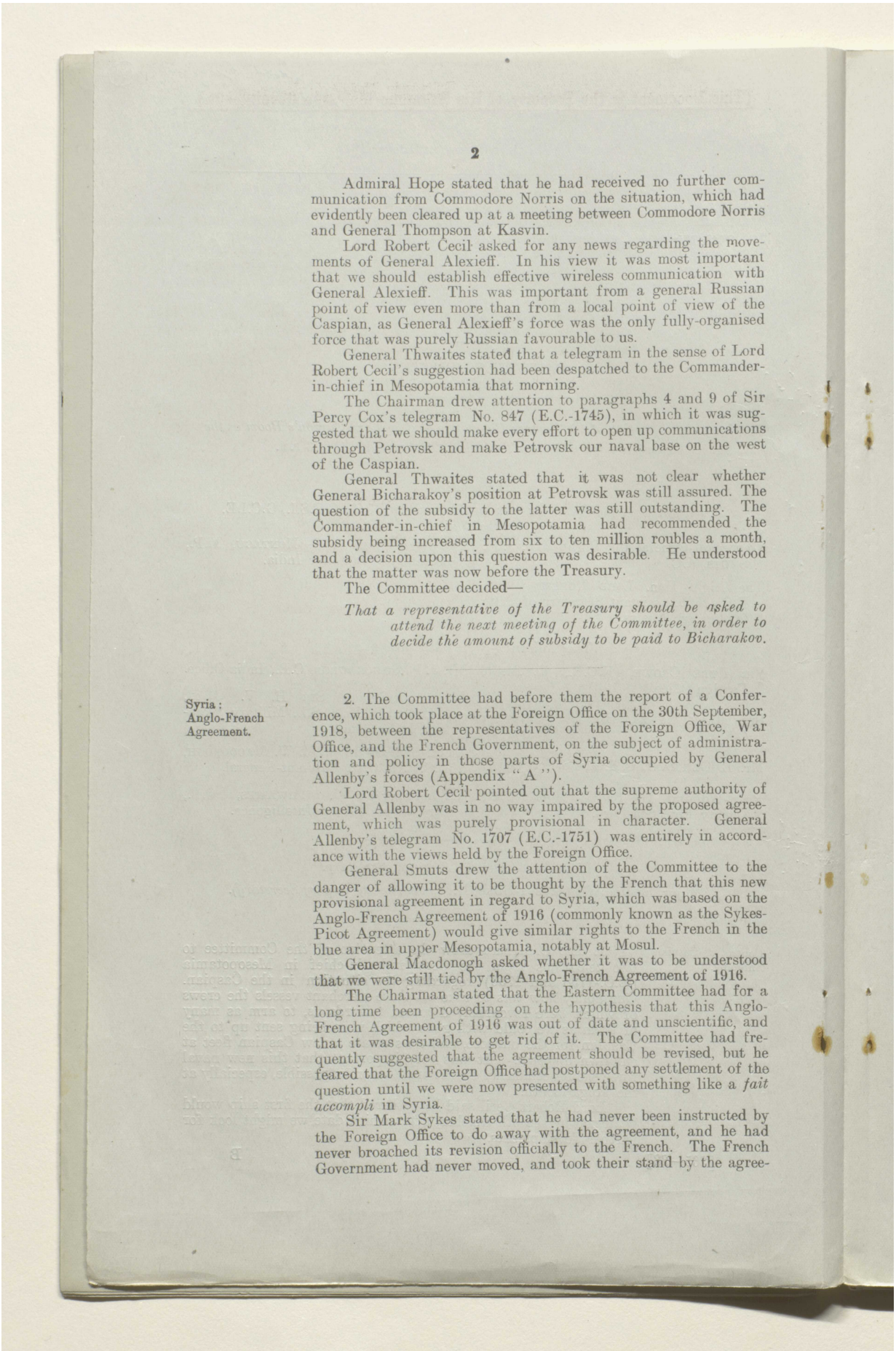

Admiral Hope stated that he had received no further communication from Commodore Norris on the situation, which had evidently been cleared up at a meeting between Commodore Norris and General Thompson at Kasvin.

Lord Robert Cecil asked for any news regarding the movements of General Alexieff. In his view it was most important that we should establish effective wireless communication with General Alexieff. This was important from a general Russian point of view even more than from a local point of view of the Caspian, as General Alexieff's force was the only fully-organised force that was purely Russian favourable to us.

General Thwaites stated that a telegram in the sense of Lord Robert Cecil's suggestion had been despatched to the Commander-in-chief in Mesopotamia that morning.

The Chairman drew attention to paragraphs 4 and 9 of Sir Percy Cox's telegram No. 847 (E.C.-1745), in which it was suggested that we should make every effort to open up communications through Petrovsk and make Petrovsk our naval base on the west of the Caspian.

General Thwaites stated that it was not clear whether General Bicharakov's position at Petrovsk was still assured. The question of the subsidy to the latter was still outstanding. The Commander-in-chief in Mesopotamia had recommended the subsidy being increased from six to ten million roubles a month, and a decision upon this question was desirable. He understood that the matter was now before the Treasury.

The Committee decided—

That a representative of the Treasury should be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee, in order to decide the amount of subsidy to be paid to Bicharakov.

Syria: Anglo-French Agreement.

2. The Committee had before them the report of a Conference, which took place at the Foreign Office on the 30th September, 1918, between the representatives of the Foreign Office, War Office, and the French Government, on the subject of administration and policy in those parts of Syria occupied by General Allenby's forces (Appendix "A").

Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that the supreme authority of General Allenby was in no way impaired by the proposed agreement, which was purely provisional in character. General Allenby's telegram No. 1707 (E.C.-1751) was entirely in accordance with the views held by the Foreign Office.

General Smuts drew the attention of the Committee to the danger of allowing it to be thought by the French that this new provisional agreement in regard to Syria, which was based on the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 (commonly known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement) would give similar rights to the French in the blue area in upper Mesopotamia, notably at Mosul.

General Macdonogh asked whether it was to be understood that we were still tied by the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

The Chairman stated that the Eastern Committee had for a long time been proceeding on the hypothesis that this Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 was out of date and unscientific, and that it was desirable to get rid of it. The Committee had frequently suggested that the agreement should be revised, but he feared that the Foreign Office had postponed any settlement of the question until we were now presented with something like a *fait accompli* in Syria.

Sir Mark Sykes stated that he had never been instructed by the Foreign Office to do away with the agreement, and he had never broached its revision officially to the French. The French Government had never moved, and took their stand by the agree-

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ment. He thought that the case of Mesopotamia might be brought up for revision, as the reason why the area of French interest was brought across Euphrates and Tigris to the Persian frontier was the desire felt by Lord Kitchener in 1916 to establish something in the nature of a buffer-state between the area in Mesopotamia in which we were mainly interested and the Russian area in Kurdo-Armenia. Unofficially, he had always impressed upon M. Picot the impossibility of the French sphere going to Mosul.

Sir Eyre Crowe pointed out that as far as the new provisional agreement in regard to Syria was concerned, it was clearly provided in Clause I that it only applied to such parts of the Ottoman Empire as were occupied by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. This excluded its application to any territory occupied by the British forces operating from Mesopotamia.

The Chairman urged the Foreign Office to take the opportunity given by the necessity of ratifying the new provisional agreement in regard to Syria to obtain the concurrence of the French Government to the exclusion of any part of the Tigris and Euphrates valley from the blue area.

Mr. Montagu drew attention to the final paragraph of the new provisional agreement in regard to the proposed declaration, that neither Great Britain nor France has any intention of annexing any part of the Arab territories, and he asked whether this applied to the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad.

Lord Robert Cecil replied that it undoubtedly applied to all Arab territories, and the paragraph alluded to by Mr. Montagu was specially inserted at our instance, and not very willingly agreed to by the French. He added that the governing consideration which guaranteed our retention of some control in the Arab territories was the promise given that these territories should not again be surrendered to the Turk, and in order to carry this out we should be compelled to retain some effective control to prevent the return of the territory.

The Chairman stated that when Sir P. Cox was in London in the spring of 1918, the Committee clearly contemplated some closer form of British rule in Basra than that to be established in Baghdad.

General Macdonogh drew attention to the recurrence of the words "civil administration" in the new provisional agreement in regard to Syria. The government of occupied enemy territory during the continuance of the war must be military and not civil, and he thought it should be made quite clear to General Allenby that this Convention with the French did not mean that he is in any way bound to set up a "civil" administration in any part of Syria or Palestine. He thought that without some covering explanation General Allenby might understand paragraph 2 of the new provisional agreement in the sense that a "civil" administration was contemplated in the near future. This was all the more necessary as last winter M. Picot had urged General Allenby to establish a joint Anglo-French civil government in Palestine.

Sir Mark Sykes stated that M. Picot's action in Palestine last winter had been due to instructions given him by the French Government, and M. Picot was not responsible for the initiation of the suggestion.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he would make clear to the French Government that General Allenby was left absolutely free to refuse to set up anything in the nature of a "civil" administration in any occupied territory. The French had, however, been anxious to know how long military administration was likely to last.

General Thwaites stated that the French were anxious to include in the agreement a statement to the effect that military

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administration should only last up to the cessation of hostilities, while the War Office felt that a civil administration should not be established until the cessation of military occupation. The matter, therefore, had been left over without decision.

The Chairman stated that the new provisional agreement seemed to fix even more firmly on our shoulders the agreement in 1916, the terms of which he, for one, deplored.

Mr. Montagu thought that we should now press for modifications of the provisional agreement, in view of the elimination of Russian claims.

Sir Mark Sykes added that the French Government agreed that the Italian claims, which had been erected upon the basis of the agreement of 1916, could not possibly stand.

The Chairman stated that quite apart from the provisions as to the blue area and area A, his main objections to the agreement lay in the surrender of a monopoly interest in Alexandretta, Mersina, and Adana to the French, and he thought that the whole question of the future of Armenia should now be raised.

General Macdonogh pointed out that since the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 had been arrived at both the British and French Governments had made declarations to the Zionist Organisation in regard to Palestine, which affected the terms of the agreement, as in the latter a large part of Galilee, including some of the Jewish colonies, were placed in Syria and outside Palestine. Dr. Weismann had pointed out the unscientific nature of the northern boundary of Palestine as laid down in the agreement. For this a line was drawn from the centre of Lake Tiberias to the Mediterranean, leaving the Waters of Merom and the control of the Upper Jordan in the French sphere.

The Chairman pointed out that Banias, which was the ancient Dan, was well inside the French sphere.

Sir Mark Sykes stated that he was in favour of the shorter Palestine, and that it was most undesirable from the Zionist point of view that the Lebanonese population of Galilee should be included in Palestine. However, he agreed that the control of the waters of Jordan should go with Palestine, and that some rectification of the frontier was essential.

Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that the whole of the new agreement was purely provisional, and did not in any way pledge us at the Peace Conference, and he thought it would probably be desirable to call the attention of the French Government to this fact. He also concurred in the view that it was absolutely necessary to draw up a new agreement in regard to Armenia. He undertook to communicate to the French Government the view of the Committee in regard to (1) Euphrates and Tigris, (2) Armenia, and (3) Galilee, and to suggest that the Agreement of 1916 ought now to be revised. He would make it clear, in communicating the agreement, if ratified, to General Allenby, that the new agreement made no binding suggestions to him with regard to the establishment of any civil administration.

The Question of Basra.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that he understood that the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to Mesopotamia was that embodied in Sir P. Cox's Memorandum, which had been circulated in April last (E.C.-173). The Committee, when the question had last been discussed, had regarded Basra as being in a special category, and had expressly reserved the question of the possible annexation of the vilayet, or at any rate of part of it. He suggested that it was very desirable for the Committee to be quite clear now as to the policy they intended to pursue in regard to this vilayet before tying their hands by a declaration which would preclude its annexation altogether.

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Lord Robert Cecil said that it was most important that the French should not be allowed to annex any portion of the blue area. We wished to secure the co-operation of the Americans in settling the future of the occupied territories, and in order to do this we must declare against annexation. As regards Basra, he thought in practice it would always be possible for us to control it, whether we annexed it or established a protectorate. What we wished to set up were independent Arab administrations in areas "A" and "B," and to help the Arabs towards stable government. He thought that this policy should be extended also to the blue and red areas on the map. All that clause 3 of the Report before the Committee bound them to was (*a*) no annexation of Arab territories, (b) independent Arab government. He suggested that the clause should be accepted, and that when it came to drafting a joint declaration our policy should be no annexation in the red and blue areas, and that in "A" and "B" there should be an independent Arab administration with European advisers. There was some danger that the French might suddenly publish a declaration on their own account and expect us to accept it. To obviate this we should at once make it clear to the French Government that we expected to be consulted in the event of their having any such intention.

Mr. Montagu urged very strongly that the Committee should accept clause 3. He hoped very much that both the British and French Governments would mutually agree to exclude annexation. His Majesty's Government stood to lose nothing by pledging itself not to use the word "annexation." We could maintain the Arab façade and yet ensure British paramountcy.

General Smuts agreed that annexation was unnecessary.

General Macdonogh thought it might be difficult for us to explain our position at Basra. We proposed to pledge ourselves to an independent Arab state. How could Basra be independent if we were there?

The Chairman quoted the following from the minutes of the 5th meeting:—

> "Sir P. Cox had been given instructions, to guide his actions, that Basra would remain British, although these had not been actually promulgated. The case of Basra, therefore, differed from the case of the rest of Iraq, where the population had not received explicit pledges of the same nature. . . . In view of the political and commercial interests involved, and of the specific pledges that had been given to the people of Basra, who had been told that we should not leave, it might be desirable to keep Basra town and district entirely in British hands. This district would extend from Fao, at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, 20 miles from Basra, to Gurmat Ali, where the Euphrates joined, 10 miles higher, or possibly Kurnah. This area contained a population of approximately 80,000, the vast majority being Arabs, the remainder Jews, Indians, Syrians, Christians, Sabeans, &c. . . . With regard to the district of Basra, General Macdonogh suggested that its limits should be extended to a line passing through Nasirieh and north of Kurnah to the Persian frontier at Hawizah. This would yield a defensible strategic frontier. It was pointed out by Lord Hardinge that this line would apparently involve the inclusion of Amara also. The advisability of proclaiming the annexation of Basra and its neighbourhood was then discussed. Should the word 'annexation' appear too inauspicious (as suggested by Sir Mark Sykes), the Chairman expressed the hope that a terminological variant, such as 'perpetual lease' or 'enclave,' might be found, both to safeguard the reality which we must not abandon, and to save the appearances which the occasion might require.

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He thought that if it was proposed to reopen the question of the future of Basra, the Indian Government ought to be consulted. The real danger to be feared was that King Hussein might demand it. Indeed, he had already put forward definite claims to which we had sent no reply. He agreed that it was desirable to prevent the French from making any declaration on their own account.

Sir Mark Sykes said that in July last the whole question of the Anglo-French Agreement had been brought before the Committee, and had been discussed at several meetings. He himself had pressed for a decision, as both M. Picot, who was in England at the time, and he himself felt that it was very necessary that their respective Governments should make up their minds what they intended to do without delay.

The Chairman pointed out that it was no fault of the Committee that no decision had been reached. The whole question had been exhaustively examined at successive meetings in July and August, and he understood that the matter had been finally left for discussion between Sir Mark Sykes and M. Picot. He had expected that the Committee would be informed before any further steps were taken. It was therefore with some surprise that he learned that the matter had apparently been settled by the Foreign Office without reference to the Committee.

The Committee agreed * that—

(A.) Every possible endeavour should be made to induce the French Government, in view of the changed circumstances since the French-Syrian Agreement was signed, viz., the elimination of Russian and the extravagance of Italian claims, to consent to its abrogation outside the limits of Syria proper.

(B.) A revised draft should be prepared with the least possible delay for acceptance by the French Government, on the lines generally of the report of the Conference at the Foreign Office as modified at the foregoing discussion, special reservation being made of the following points in the draft:—

(i.) The Tigris and Euphrates valleys to be excluded from that portion of the Agreement relating to Area A, which provided for special rights to be exercised by the French in relation to—

(*a.*) rights of enterprise and local loans;

(*b.*) exclusive right of appointing local advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation.

(ii.) The rectification of the Palestinian frontier and the exclusion of old Palestine from the blue area.

(iii.) The blue area to be limited if possible to Syria proper.

(iv.) The future of Armenia to be provided for.

And decided—

That the Chairman and Lord Robert Cecil should consult together with a view to the necessary action to be taken.

**Note by the Secretary.*—Lord Robert Cecil dissented from this conclusion and said that he understood the decision of the Committee to have been as follows:—(*a*) Every possible endeavour should be made to induce the French Government, in view of the changed circumstances since the French-Syrian Agreement was signed, viz., the elimination of Russian, and the extravagance of Italian claims, to consent to its modification; (*b*) The arrangement made at the Foreign Office to be ratified, but a letter to be written covering the ratification in which the French Government should be asked to consent to such modification, calling special attention to the impossibility of including the Euphrates and Tigris valleys in Area A, and the necessity of a rectification of the Palestinian frontier; (*c*) In any negotiation for a new agreement the future of lesser Armenia should be reconsidered.

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Our Policy in Persia.

3. The Committee resumed the discussion adjourned from the previous meeting (33rd meeting, minute 4), and had before them the following papers:—E.C.-465, 501, 672, 1026, 1465, 1506, 1508, 1677, 1718, 1727, and 1765 (of which E.C.-465, 1718, 1727, and 1765 are printed as Appendix (B)).

The Chairman said the question was, were the Committee in favour of an alliance with Persia or not? It was clear that they had never committed themselves definitely to such a policy. He had been rather disturbed by a somewhat ambiguous telegram which had been sent by the War Office to General Marshall, No. 67118, dated the 25th September (E.C.-1703). The Director of Military Operations, however, had informed him that the statement in the telegram that it would be advantageous to us to have Persia as an ally expressed the view of the War Office only, and it was not intended to convey that of His Majesty's Government. The Committee had now before them a telegram from Cox, E.C.-1765, which was entirely against an alliance.

Mr. Montagu referred to certain pledges and promises which had been made to Vossugh, and said that what he wished was that Persia should come definitely on our side, in the same way that America was on our side, although there was no formal alliance. The Committee had already expressed their view that this was desirable. There were three great advantages which would accrue: (*a*) The effect on Afghanistan and India; (*b*) our position in Persia would be regularised, and our position on the Kasvin road and our maintenance of British forces in a neutral country would be justifiable; and (*c*) we could turn out of Persia all enemy agents, who were at present a great source of embarrassment. As regards the objections raised by Cox, he did not see why an alliance would involve us in any great outlay, as we should tell Persia that we did not want her active military co-operation. We already paid Starosselski's Cossacks and the Bakhtiaris, and our control over them would certainly be strengthened if we were allied with Persia. As regards possible complications arising at the Peace Conference and extravagant demands that Persia might make if she entered the war and consequently took part in the Conference, he himself did not share Cox's apprehension. He did not think Persia could really do any harm, nor would she be justified in expecting territory.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he agreed with Mr. Montagu, and thought that the balance between the advantages and disadvantages lay in favour of Persia's co-belligerency. He thought that it might be unwise for us to continue to pay for a force which was controlled by a Russian commander, and he himself would prefer to see it commanded by a Persian or Franco-Swiss officer. There could be hardly any doubt that both the Bakhtiaris and Starosselski were only prevented by lack of money from taking a much more prominent part in the politics of the country. If we decided to invite Persia to come in as a co-belligerent, there would be no need for us to make any definite promises, though we might hint that we would do our best to recover Persian Azerbaijan. On the other hand, allies or co-belligerents were not always an unmixed blessing, *e.g.*, Portugal. He felt, however, that it would be better in the circumstances for the Committee to wait before coming to a decision, as it might be as well to see what course Turkey intended to pursue.

General Smuts said one of the advantages of Portugal's alliance had been the ships it had brought to us. The question now before the Committee declined in importance as the Turkish menace receded. As regards our position in Persia, he thought that this was perfectly regular, so long as Turkish troops were also there. He confessed that he rather shared Cox's apprehension that Persia would demand an extravagant price for her declaring war against Turkey. He agreed that it would be wiser for the present to wait on events.

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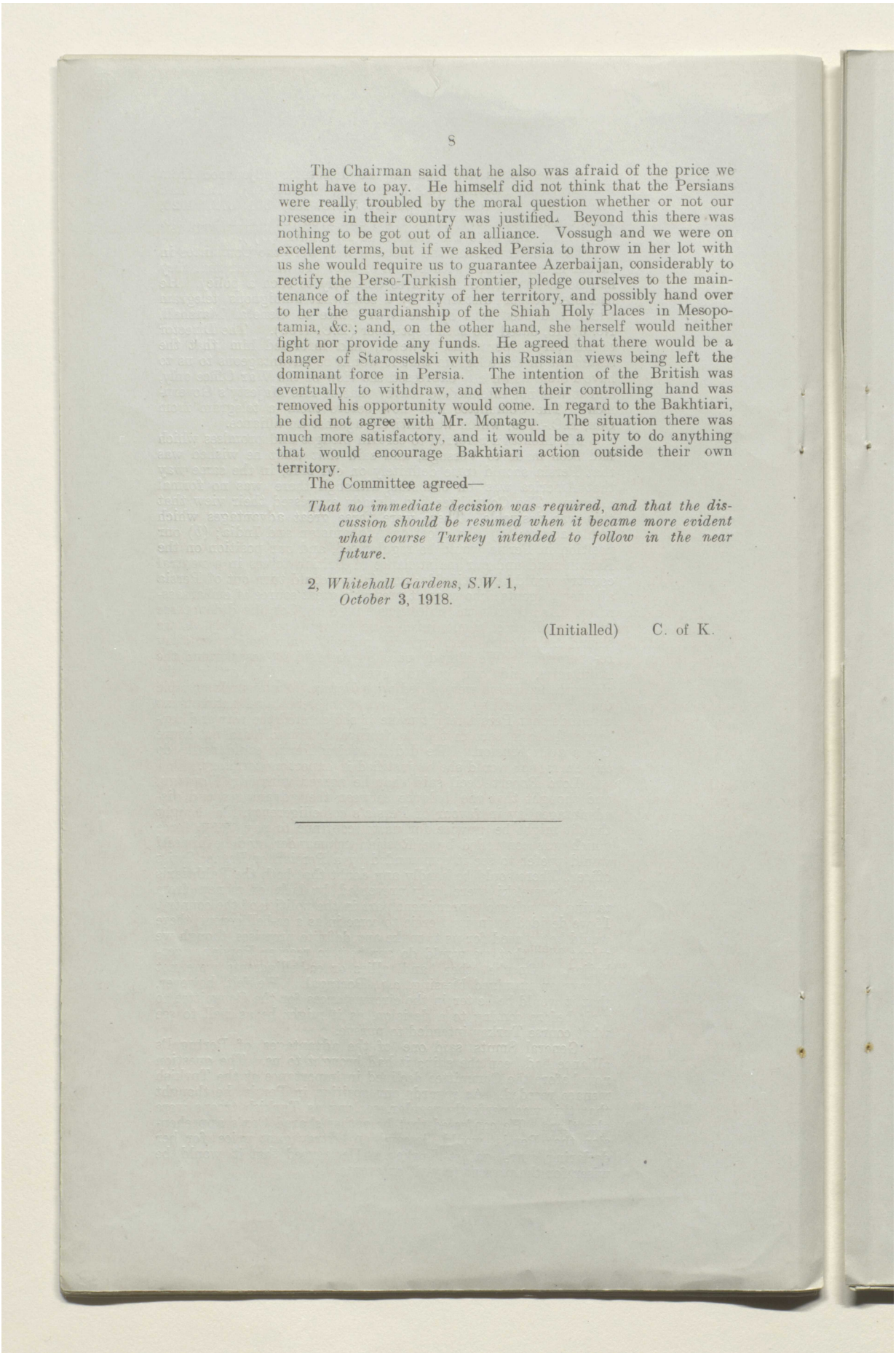

The Chairman said that he also was afraid of the price we might have to pay. He himself did not think that the Persians were really troubled by the moral question whether or not our presence in their country was justified. Beyond this there was nothing to be got out of an alliance. Vossugh and we were on excellent terms, but if we asked Persia to throw in her lot with us she would require us to guarantee Azerbaijan, considerably to rectify the Perso-Turkish frontier, pledge ourselves to the maintenance of the integrity of her territory, and possibly hand over to her the guardianship of the Shiah Holy Places in Mesopotamia, &c.; and, on the other hand, she herself would neither fight nor provide any funds. He agreed that there would be a danger of Starosselski with his Russian views being left the dominant force in Persia. The intention of the British was eventually to withdraw, and when their controlling hand was removed his opportunity would come. In regard to the Bakhtiari, he did not agree with Mr. Montagu. The situation there was much more satisfactory, and it would be a pity to do anything that would encourage Bakhtiari action outside their own territory.

The Committee agreed—

That no immediate decision was required, and that the discussion should be resumed when it became more evident what course Turkey intended to follow in the near future.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.* 1,
October 3, 1918.

(Initialled) C. of K.

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APPENDIX (A).

(E.C.-1769.)

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

A Conference took place at the Foreign Office to-day, at which were present:—

Lord Robert Cecil (*Chairman*).

Sir Eyre Crowe.	The French Ambassador.
Major-General Thwaites, D.M.I.	M. de Fleuriau.
Sir Mark Sykes.	M. Georges Picot.
Lieutenant-Colonel Gribbon.	

I. On the proposition of Lord Robert Cecil, the following statement was agreed upon, subject to the confirmation of the British and French Governments:—

In the areas of special French interest, as described in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916, which are or may be occupied by the Allied forces of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the Commander-in-chief will recognise the representative of the French Government as his Chief Political Adviser. The functions of the Chief Political Adviser will be as follows:—

1. Subject to the supreme authority of the Commander-in-chief, the Chief Political Adviser will act as sole intermediary on political and administrative questions between the Commander-in-chief and any Arab Government or Governments, permanent or provisional, which may be set up in Area A, and recognised under the terms of clause 1 of the Agreement of 1916.

Provided that nothing in this clause shall be construed as denying to any person the right of direct access to the Commander-in-chief, nor as giving the Chief Political Adviser the right to attend military conferences or act as intermediary on military questions between the Commander-in-chief or his staff and Commander of Allied Arab military forces.

At the same time, it shall be understood that the Commander-in-chief shall subsequently communicate to the Chief Political Adviser the substance of any official conversation on non-military matters which may have passed directly between himself and any person who would be entitled to approach him through the Chief Political Adviser.

2. At the request of the Commander-in-chief, and subject to his supreme authority, the Chief Political Adviser will be charged by the Commander-in-chief with the establishment of such provisional civil administration in the towns of the Syrian littoral situated in the Blue area, and in the Blue area in general, as may be necessary for the maintenance of order and the facilitating of military operations.

3. Subject to the approval of the Commander-in-chief, the Chief Political Adviser will provide:—

(*a.*) Staff in order to enable him to perform his functions as intermediary as described in clause 1 of this paper.

(*b.*) Such European advisory staff and assistants as the Arab Government or Governments set up in Area A may require under clause 1 of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916.

(*c.*) Such *personnel* as may be necessary for civil duties in the littoral towns or other parts of the Blue area.

Provided that these officers will hold their posts under the supreme authority of the Commander-in-chief, who is empowered to require the Chief Political Adviser to replace any advisory, administrative, or liaison officer on grounds of competence, conduct, or discipline.

4. The Chief Political Adviser will be responsible to the Commander-in-chief for political relations in Area A, and for political relations and provisional civil administration in the Blue area.

5. The above arrangement shall remain in force until such time as the military situation justifies reconsideration of the question of civil administration and political relations.

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II. The British Representatives undertook that representations should at once be made to Sir E. Allenby with a view to his arranging that in any operations in the Blue Area a prominent place should be assigned to French troops, so far as military considerations permitted.

III. The Conference agree to recommend that the British and French Governments should take an early opportunity to issue a declaration, or declarations, defining their attitude towards the Arab territories liberated from Turkish rule. Such a declaration should make it clear that neither Government has any intention of annexing any part of the Arab territories, but that in accordance with the provisions of the Anglo-French Agreement in 1916, both are determined to recognise and uphold an independent Arab State or Confederation of States, and with this view to lend their assistance in order to secure the effective administration of those territories under the authority of the native rulers and peoples.

Foreign Office, September 30, 1918.

APPENDIX (B).

(E.C.-465.)

"OUR POLICY IN PERSIA."

(Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India.)

I want to ask my colleagues to consider whether there ought not to be a substantial change in our policy in Persia. I know full well that the matter has been considered, but it seems to me that new considerations warrant a reconsideration, and it is not, I hope, too late to get on to sound lines.

The criticism that I would make with great respect of our present policy is that it is neither a policy of conciliation nor a policy of control.

A new feature of the situation, upon which I would pin the whole of my argument, is the appearance of the Turks in Tabriz, and their threatened advance into the interior of Persia. Up till now the Turk and the German acted in the interior, not by means of military force, but by agents and money, and up till now, therefore, the Russians and the British were regarded as Imperialistic, with annexationist objectives, and the Persian was inclined to favour the Turk. The disappearance of the Russian as a result of the recent revolution and the military activities of the Turk are leading, it would appear, to a revolt of feeling against the Turk, and to a chance being offered to us of appearing as the friend of the Persian who is willing and anxious to help him to withstand the foreign invader.

There is every prospect of a Vossugh-ed-Dowleh administration. It seems to me that it is highly desirable to obtain an alliance with that Government with a view to keeping out of Persia enemies and undesirables. So far as I am able to understand the situation, the great obstacle has been our desire to perpetuate, and to force recognition of, the South Persian Rifles. But recent events have shown that the South Persian Rifles may be in an emergency a useless force, and dangerous because of their uselessness. It seems to me that we ought to concentrate our military operations in Persia against the Turk and the German, and not against the Persian or the Persian tribes. A cardinal point in the policy of the Eastern Committee, and one which I hope will be insisted upon and pursued, is the maintenance of the cordon on the Afghanistan border, and the perfection of a strong cordon from Mesopotamia to the Caspian. These two cordons we should maintain, and I am informed that any Persian Government would be bound to do anything we wanted if we held the Hamadan Road in sufficient force. This in itself would keep order in Southern Persia. For although the Persian Government is so weak, yet the tribes only move, I suspect, when they have bribed the Persian Government to put obstacles into our way when dealing with them. If no obstacles were put in our way, and the tribes were not therefore tacitly supported, they would remain quiescent, and it seems to me that the expulsion of German and Turk is so important to us that the South Persian Rifles ought not to be permitted to be an obstacle in the formation of an alliance. We have discovered that this force cannot be relied upon, and is directly provocative to the tribes, for the immediate cause of the recent outbreak appears to have been the action of Sykes with the South Persian Rifles. It has also been shown that we are not in a position to reinforce with speed when these more or less isolated forces get into difficulties.

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Our present policy is out of harmony with our general professions in the war, has always been opposed by the Government of India, and seems to me to have led to the unhappy events of the past few weeks, and to be liable to lead to the dissipation of forces urgently required in the real centres of war. If we had a policy of cordon-cum-alliance, we could still employ agents, such as Dunsterville and Stokes; we could still, of course, protect our oil-fields; we should be in a far less dangerous position, and, I should have thought, would have achieved everything that we require south of the Hamadan Road. As regards the north, we should still be exposed to the Trans-Caspian danger, which requires separate treatment, and the enlistment of co-operation in Turkestan.

It seems to me that there is only one alternative to this, and that is a real, sustained, imperative military expedition into Persia, whole-heartedly antagonistic to the Persians: but this would only be adopted after the other had been tried and had failed. I do not think that we wish, if it can be avoided, to embark on new military operations, but I cannot help wondering whether we are not at the moment falling between two stools.

(Initialled) E. S. M.

June 5, 1918.

PERSIA.

(E.C.-1718.)

Mr. Balfour to Sir P. Cox (Tehran).

(No. 511.) *Foreign Office, September* 27, 1918, 9 P.M.

GENERAL situation as described in your telegram No. 831 of 23rd September has been carefully considered. It is assumed that when drafting your telegram you were still unaware of great success recently attained by General Allenby in Palestine and the victories in Bulgaria, which may be expected materially to affect both the actual position and further proceedings of the Turks in North-West Persia, and the general opinion in Persia as to the ultimate defeat of the German-Turkish cause.

I should be glad to hear to what extent situation described in your telegram may accordingly have changed.

Turning to the concessions which would, in opinion of Persian Prime Minister, render his Government "popular," His Majesty's Government are prepared to agree to both points 1 and 2. As regards the first part of point 3, namely, the transfer of South Persia Rifles at Shiraz to Persian control, is there not a danger that such a measure might have bad effect on maintenance of order throughout Fars, and, indeed, all Southern Persia. If, however, you have satisfied yourself that no undue risk will be incurred, His Majesty's Government are prepared to agree to hand over control of force in the manner suggested. They are doubtful as to the desirability of any commission of neutral officers arriving in Persia at the present juncture. In any case Swiss would be preferable to Scandinavian officers, and to this Vossugh-ed-Dowleh would presumably raise no objection, in view of statement reported in second sentence of Sir C. Marling's telegram No. 746 of 27th August. You may, however, be able to get him to drop the commission of neutral officers for the present which we should greatly prefer. If we agree to the Fars South Persia Rifles being made over to Persian control at once, the need of such Commission does not appear to be pressing.

Subject to the above amendments, His Majesty's Government concur in publication of proposed communiqué. They would, however, strongly deprecate taking the further steps suggested for originating correspondence with both belligerents respecting the reciprocal evacuation of Persian territory. Whatever the nature of the Turkish reply to a request for evacuation (on this point see my telegram No. 33 of 10th January), the freedom of action of our military authorities might be seriously impaired, having regard to the possibility of a continuance or future renewal of Turkish activities notwithstanding any undertakings given, and to the danger which may threaten our position in the Caspian region even beyond the Persian border.

You will no doubt furnish me with your observations on the above points before taking any further definite action.

(Repeated to India.)

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(E.C.-1727.)

QUESTION OF AN "ALLIANCE" WITH PERSIA.

Memorandum by Secretary of State for India.

I circulate this précis to my colleagues. It is evident therefrom that we have, not unnaturally, definitely committed ourselves to a desire to get Persia to come in on our side. The distinction between this and an alliance is, I know, of great importance to some of my colleagues. I desire, however, merely to press that the communiqué which Sir P. Cox is to make should be used to get what we have desired, viz., the co-operation of Persia against the enemy—call it what you will.

(Initialled) E. S. M.

Précis.

1. Sir C. Marling, in his telegram No. 431 of the 20th May, 1918, commenting on the general situation as affected by the Turkish advance in the Caucasus, remarked that, "while it is possible that Persia may take alarm and throw herself into our arms, it is more probable that, if the enemy is able to make any show of superior force, she may timidly go over to them." In these circumstances, Sir C. Marling urged that we should "endeavour to make sure of Mussulman Persia before that position is reached, and this by *making an alliance with her.*"

2. The Foreign Office replied (telegram No. 285 of the 23rd May, 1918):—

> "If alternative to Persian alliance with Great Britain is Persian alliance with Turkey and our enemies *we certainly prefer former.* If, however, alternative is continued neutrality, it seems that comparatively little would be gained by alliance. Should, therefore, Vosugh in course of conversation suggest idea of alliance, *you should not reject proposal*, but should endeavour to ascertain his exact meaning, and what concessions he would require in return."

3. To this Sir C. Marling replied (telegram No. 451 of the 24th May, 1918):—

> "Military advantages of alliance would be small, but not negligible, while I submit that acquisition of an independent Moslem ally would have far-reaching effect in Asia."

4. The question of policy in Persia was discussed at considerable length by the Eastern Committee on the 24th June, 1918.* The *alliance* question figured prominently in the discussion; and the telegram to Teheran (No. 347 of the 29th June, 1918), sent at the Committee's direction, contained the following passage on the subject:—

> "Question has been discussed whether such a position† can best be secured by explicit understanding on above basis, or *whether a Treaty or Alliance is required.*
>
> "Latter would publish new relationship to world, and would bind future Persian Cabinets as well as that which concluded it. But it might entail inconvenient obligations on us, including that of immediate military action for recovery of Tabriz and Azerbaijan, which we could not in existing circumstances assume. Moreover, it seems doubtful *whether Persia can give more by an alliance than* she could by friendly co-operation."

The last sentence, it will be observed, makes the distinction between "alliance" and "co-operation." This point was raised by the Secretary of State for India in the course of the Eastern Committee discussion, as the following extract from the Minutes shows:—

> "Mr. Montagu suggested that the word 'alliance' need not be used in the message, if it was quite clear that Persia would take action against, and would permit us to take action against, the enemy."

* See 16th Minutes of the Eastern Committee, Section 3.
† *I.e.*, active friendliness of Persia for remainder of war.

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5. Sir C. Marling, in his reply (telegram No. 593 of the 2nd July, 1918), dealt mainly with the immediate military situation, and the need for increased military effort on the part of His Majesty's Government. He did not mention the question of an alliance, which appears to have been allowed to drop. It was revived by the suggestion made by Sir C. Marling in his telegram No. 795 of the 8th September, that we should utilise the Persian Cossack Brigade against the Turk, "a course which, of course, will involve Persia in the war." In a later telegram, No. 800 of the 10th September, Sir C. Marling reported that the Persian Prime Minister, *i.e.*, Vosugh-ed-Dowleh, was "strongly in favour of joining us, and is willing to work to this end."

6. In a recent telegram (No. 67118 of the 25th September, 1918, to Bagdad), the War Office expressed the view that "it will be advantageous to us to have Persia in as our ally, even if she is not an active one; for as long as she maintains her neutrality, she might come in against us."

(Initialled) J. E. S.

Political Department, India Office,
September 30, 1918.

PERSIA.

(E.C.-1765.)

Sir P. Cox to Mr. Balfour.—(Received October 2, 8 A.M.)

Tehran, October 1, 1918.
(No. 857.) (*October* 1, 5·30 P.M.)

PLEASE see Troopers telegram No. 67118, dated 25th September, to General Bagdad, of which copy reached me simultaneously with your telegram No. 511 of 27th September.

Former was perhaps drafted before portent of Allenby's victory was fully apparent, but, in view of opinion expressed therein as to desirability of Persia entering lists on our side, I venture to offer following appreciation of position as it appears to me :—

There would be no difficulty in bringing Persia in, provided we could satisfy certain essential conditions as stated below; but her sole motives for coming in would be in order to appear at Peace Conference as a belligerent, with hope of getting her independence guaranteed internationally, and also of receiving a slice of Turkish territory in neighbourhood of frontier as compensation for injuries suffered. As a belligerent she would be a sleeping partner, and expect us to do the business.

Preliminary conditions would be, first, that we should demonstrate convincingly that we have sufficient force on Kermanshah–Enzeli line to cope with any concentration enemy might be able to bring against us, and to prevent any further incursions into Persia. Secondly, that we should supply her with necessary funds in bullion, guns, rifles, munitions, clothing, and equipment. First condition we were not in a position to satisfy a week ago, but we may possibly be now as result of Palestine victory, Second, so far as I can see, we could not satisfy either then or now.

Advantages we should derive from Persia coming in with us are: (1) Moral effect of event in Afghanistan and India; (2) certainty that she will not come in against us; (3) we should be in a more favourable position in many ways, such as control of telegraphs and improvement of communications.

First advantage still holds good; second is partly achieved by Palestine victory.

Disadvantages we suffer by her coming in are as follows: The only elements Persia possesses of which military use could be forthwith made would be (1) Starosselski and his Cossacks, and (2) Bakhtiaris and a few other small tribal contingents. Neither would be of much military value. Starosselski, who has already increased his brigade to a division of 6,000 men and expresses his ability to increase it speedily to 12,000 if necessary, would play the leading rôle and be awkward at end of war with a powerful armed force with which [? he would be] able, in accordance with his declared ambition, to maintain Russia's time-honoured footing in Northern Persia. Similarly, Bakhtiaris, who can be very useful to us, and at the same time innocuous so long as employed in their own country or on borders of it, would be able to arm and

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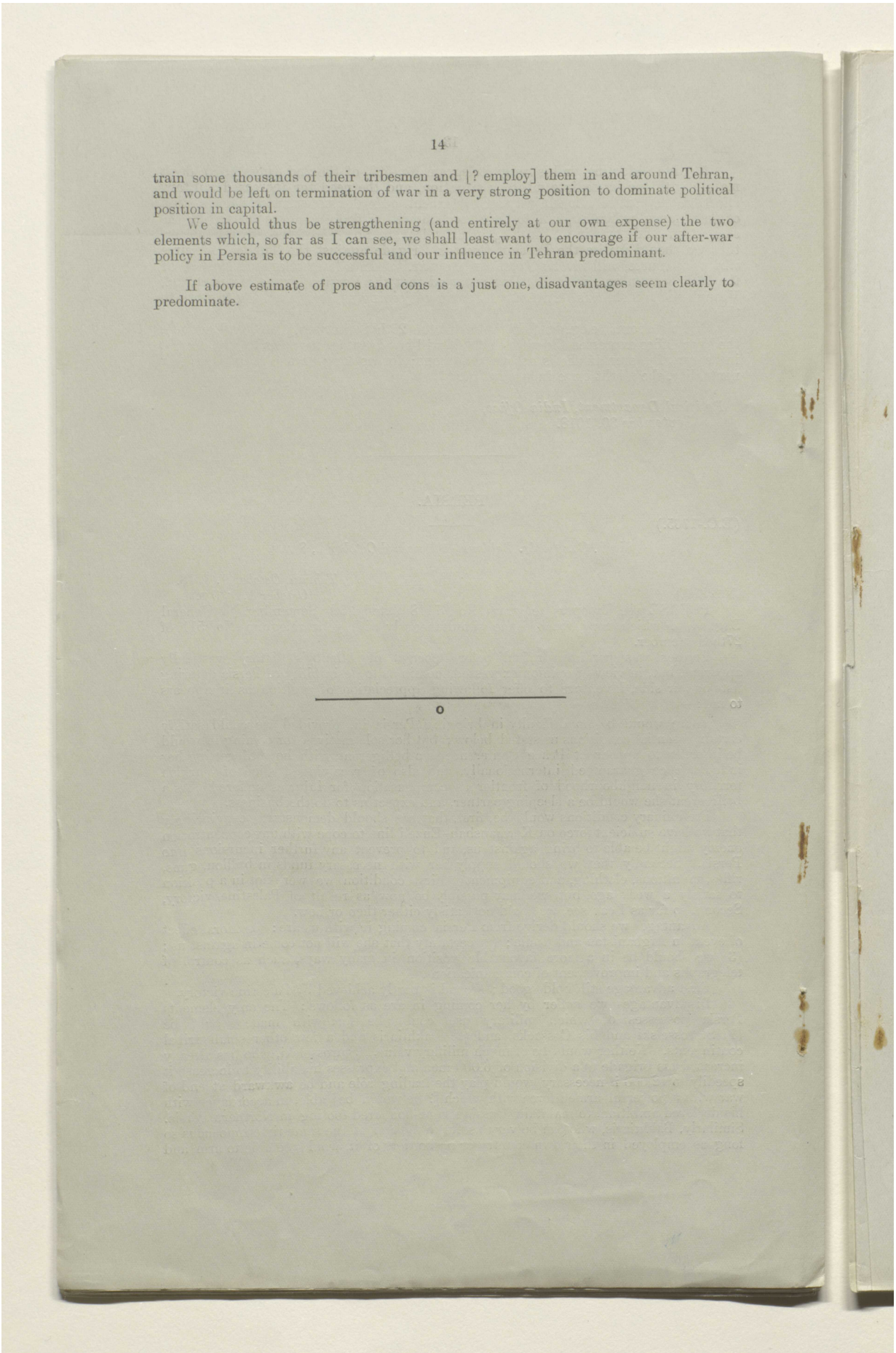

train some thousands of their tribesmen and [? employ] them in and around Tehran, and would be left on termination of war in a very strong position to dominate political position in capital.

We should thus be strengthening (and entirely at our own expense) the two elements which, so far as I can see, we shall least want to encourage if our after-war policy in Persia is to be successful and our influence in Tehran predominant.

If above estimate of pros and cons is a just one, disadvantages seem clearly to predominate.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. October 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 35th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, October 16, 1918, at 3 P.M., and Friday, October 17, 1918, at 10·30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., *(in the Chair)*.

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The following were also present:

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bart., M.P., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury.

SIR THOMAS W. HOLDERNESS, G.C.B., K.C.S.I., Under-Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR *(Secretary)*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., *Acting Deputy Secretary*.

Caspian Situation:
(*a*.) Bicharakoff's Subsidy;
(*b*.) Control of Caspian Fleet;
(*c*.) Financial Commitments in Persia.

The Chairman drew the attention of the Committee to a memorandum submitted by the War Office on the subject of General Bicharakoff's subsidy (E.C.–1945, dated 15th October). It would appear that since the last meeting of the Committee a rupture had taken place between Bicharakoff and the British, whereby the former had cut himself adrift from all relations with us. This action enabled us to consider afresh the question of continuing any payments to Bicharakoff, who was still at Petrovsk. The main point to consider was whether the withdrawal of the subsidy would affect disadvantageously our communications with General Alexieff's forces at Ekaterinodar.

General Macdonogh expressed the view that it would be a very good thing to get rid of General Bicharakoff. The Turks were

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withdrawing from the Caucasus, and we were not now in anything like the same position *vis-à-vis* the danger of Turkish expansion as we were when the subsidy had been paid. Regarding the question of communications with General Alexieff's forces, he thought that the opening up of Siberia to our forces and those of our Allies made the maintenance of such communications from the South far less important than they had hitherto been.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that the main value of communications with General Alexieff's forces was to secure through them further communications with the Czecho-Slovak forces in the Volga district, and as it now appeared that the latter had been defeated, there was no connection between the forces of General Alexieff and the Czechs. He therefore hesitated as to the advisability of completely cutting ourselves off from General Bicharakoff, more especially in the event of our getting a British fleet into the Black Sea, and requiring the assistance of friendly forces in South Russia.

Colonel Gribbon thought that General Alexieff's people would probably take steps to keep in communication with us, and that this matter might be left to them. General Thomson reported that Bicharakoff was no longer of any value to us in connection with the Caspian fleet, which was the most important point to be considered.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that there were clearly two distinct points—first, the question of considering the subsidy to Bicharakoff; and, secondly, the question of buying the fleet. The latter appeared to him the more urgent of the two objectives.

Mr. Keynes stated that our promises of financial support to General Bicharakoff did not extend beyond the middle of this month, and it was not worth our while to continue the subsidy of 250,000*l.* a month to General Bicharakoff simply for the purpose of using him as a telegraph station. With regard to the amount of money obtainable from the Imperial Bank of Persia, he estimated that we could now obtain something like 40,000,000 krans a month as against 25,000,000, which had been his previous estimate. Sir Percy Cox required about 30,000,000 krans a month for expenditure controlled by him, of which the most important items were—

(1.) The maintenance of the East Persian cordon.
(2.) The subsidy of the Persian Government.
(3.) The maintenance of the South Persia Rifles.

If Sir Percy Cox's expenditure had priority over the expenditure by the military and naval authorities in North-West Persia and the Caspian, it might be possible to find upwards of 15,000,000 krans a month for the latter, which comprised the expenditure between Hamadan and the Caspian inclusive. It would be impossible to continue payments to General Bicharakoff without cutting expenditure elsewhere. He wished to make it clear that the Imperial Bank of Persia, although pressed, had refused to give us any estimate of the amount of money which they could place at our disposal, and that the estimate of 40,000,000 krans per month was his own.

Admiral Hope stated that all expenditure by the naval authorities was being done through the army, and that the estimated cost of maintaining the ships already in our possession on the Caspian amounted to 20,000*l.* sterling a month. Now that our ships were armed, it was quite clear that the Bolshevik fleet in Baku was frightened of us, and he thought we could afford to neglect it.

Lord Robert Cecil thought we should take every opportunity of getting all the ships we could in addition to those already in our hands, as the Turks or Germans might seize the Bolshevik ships and man them with their own forces.

Colonel Gribbon stated that intelligence reports showed that although some of the German troops had left the Caucasus, there were still Germans in the neighbourhood, and that it was known that they had been making financial arrangements for purchase.

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The Committee decided :—

(1.) *That the subsidy to General Bicharakoff should be suspended.*

(2.) *That Sir Percy Cox and General Marshall should be informed that Sir Percy Cox's financial requirements should continue to have priority over all other demands upon the Imperial Bank of Persia ;*

(3.) *That after Sir Percy Cox's demands had been satisfied, the necessary moneys should be provided for the effective maintenance of our naval forces in the Caspian ;*

(4.) *That the Admiralty should send a telegram to the Senior Naval Officer in the Caspian, reiterating our former policy regarding the desirability of obtaining possession of as many ships as possible, asking for details with regard to the present naval position in the Caspian, and enquiring what expenditure would be entailed in order to get control of more ships, including the armed ships of the Caspian fleet.*

Transcaspia : (*a.*) Financing of Transcaspian Government.

2. The Committee had before them the following papers : E.C.–1653, 1790, 1791, 1814, 1869, 1896, 1907, 1908, and 1912, on the question of financing the Transcaspian Government at Askabad.

Mr. Montagu said that in the Viceroy's telegram of the 2nd October (E.C.–1791), various suggestions had been made in regard to the possible financial assistance to the Transcaspian Government :

(*a.*) Buying up rouble notes in Persia.

(*b.*) Local issue of new type of notes by Askabad Government, based on a credit of 1,000,000*l.* in London.

(*c.*) Exchange of money at present hoarded in Turkestan for bank drafts on London.

(*d.*) The hypothecation of Central Asian railways, concessions in undeveloped oilfields, advances against cotton, &c.

The Indian Government recommended the adoption of methods (*b*) and (*c*) of the above. Mr. Montagu said that his Department had prepared a Note on the subject (E.C.–1907), which pointed out that General Malleson was proceeding about the 15th October to Askabad, and expected that the Government there would raise financial questions with him, and he wished to be in a position to discuss them. The Note suggested that Malleson might be authorised to discuss with the Government the difficulties of obtaining the form of currency which would help them ; to say that the roubles which could be supplied were very limited, and to enquire whether krans would serve ; to explain the difficulty of obtaining them ; to mention that local coin will be obtained by the sale of drafts on London, if this should prove to be practicable ; and to offer to supply notes encashable in London if the Transcaspian Government thought that they could be put into circulation ; he might further be authorised to discuss the comparative prospects of acceptability in Transcaspia of special notes, which would take longer to manufacture and issue, and of British Treasury notes ; and, lastly, he might be warned of the importance of reserving all questions as to the time and amount of assistance to be given, and confining the discussion as closely as possible to the practicability of overcoming the currency difficulty which threatened to stand in the way of any assistance at all. These suggestions, Mr. Montagu thought, did not commit His Majesty's Government to much. It appeared, however, that Malleson had led the Askabad Government to believe that we might be prepared to render them some financial assistance.

Lord Robert Cecil said that any promise made by Malleson must, of course, be kept. It was, moreover, desirable to secure the assistance of that Government in preventing potential enemies from

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getting to Askabad and Krasnovodsk. The point was, what advantage did we stand to gain by financing a Government of doubtful authority?

Mr. Keynes said that any promise made by General Malleson had been made without Treasury sanction, and Malleson had, therefore, been warned to exercise great caution in regard to such policy. As regards the suggestion of the Indian Government, the idea of starting a new rouble currency in Transcaspia was hopeless, and was most strongly deprecated by his department. The view of the Treasury was that the matter was not urgent, as the Askabad Government had recently come in for a windfall of 72,000,000 roubles, which should serve to last them for a long time.

Colonel Gribbon said that the War Office was circulating to the Committee a paper upon the situation in Azerbaijan, where they had reason to believe there would shortly be a considerable influx of Enver's relatives and supporters. In view of this it was desirable to keep the Transcaspian Government friendly to us.

The Chairman referred to the very confused state of affairs which existed in Transcaspia and Russian Turkestan, and said that our recent successes in Palestine, and the consequent withdrawal of German and Turkish troops from the Caucasus westwards, rendered the position on the other side of the Caspian more favourable to us, and there was, consequently, not the same necessity to conciliate the Askabad Government, which appeared, moreover, to be a dubious and rather disreputable concern.

The Committee decided—

That the India Office should instruct General Malleson that the change in the general situation rendered our previous policy of keeping the Transcaspian Government going, of doubtful value, and that he should, therefore, be strictly on his guard against committing himself to spending money. He should further be informed that His Majesty's Government did not, in any case, contemplate any issue of notes or the establishment of a local currency.

(*b.*) Purchase of Cotton and Wool in Transcaspia.

The Committee had before them the Government of India's telegram No. 13468 (E.C.–1812) and a letter No. 41019 from the Military Secretary, India Office to the Treasury (E.C.–1889) on the subject of the purchase of cotton and wool in Transcaspia.

The Chairman said that the Indian Government, in the former paper, pointed out the possibilities of making considerable use of the Merv-Turkomans for guerilla warfare against the Bolsheviks, and suggested that perhaps the best method of countering the latter's economic leverage was to let it be known among the Turkomans that we were prepared to pay fair prices for all cotton and wool; if the Bolsheviks attempted to interrupt this traffic it would put the Turkomans against them; if, on the other hand, the traffic took place, we would get opportunities of establishing relations with the Turkomans which might have good resultant effects, while, incidentally, Germany would be deprived of a certain quantity of raw material. The telegram further said that the Indian Government desired, purely as a military measure, to authorise Malleson to spend up to 75,000 rupees a month for this purpose. The letter from the India Office to the Treasury stated that as at present advised the Secretary of State for India was in favour of the course of action advocated by the Indian Government.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the proposal really amounted to another form of subsidy. He was not disturbed by the possibility of the cotton and wool reaching Germany if we decided against purchasing it, as owing to recent military events it seemed most unlikely that it could ever reach German hands.

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The Committee decided—

That the alleged advantages of the proposal did not, in the circumstances, justify the outlay and instructed the India Office to inform the Government of India accordingly.

(*Mr. Keynes withdrew.*)

Railways in Persia.

3. The Committee had before them the following papers: E.C.–1632, 1788, 1808, and 1939, on the subject of future construction of railways in Persia and Mesopotamia.

Mr. Montagu said that before the Committee proceeded to discuss the subject he wished to raise a point of procedure. A week or two previously, his department had addressed the War Office on the question of control of India's output of rails, to which no reply had been received. The War Office had, however, submitted to the War Cabinet a paper on this subject (G.T.–5892) which raised a large constitutional question, without any reference to his department. It was a matter, he thought, which might have been settled between the two departments concerned. Had they been unable to arrive at an agreement, he would himself have suggested that the question be referred to the Eastern Committee. He thought that before the matter was discussed either by the Committee or the Cabinet, his department was entitled to some explanation, from the War Office, of their action. In his view, the War Office had no constitutional right to say that the need of rails for Mesopotamia took precedence over India's own requirements. The War Office claimed to allocate all India's output of rails. His own attitude was that the War Office had no more right to India's output of rails than they had to its output of food or men supplied by India. The Indian Government were quite ready to assist in every possible way, and to allow the War Office to dispose of whatever rails were not absolutely necessary for India's own needs, but they were not prepared to waive their rights.

Sir Thomas Holderness pointed out that the War Office draft telegram (E.C.–1808) which had been submitted to the Eastern Committee for decision bore the same date as their paper on the output of rails which the War Office circulated to the Cabinet. Hitherto India had allowed the War Office to have the whole output of Tata's rails. The Commander-in-Chief in India, however, now maintained that the output of these rails up to the end of December was urgently required for other objects, including the Chaman extension. The contention of the War Office was that these rails were required for strategical purposes in Mesopotamia. The Secretary of State for India had sent the Viceroy's telegram, pointing out the urgent necessity of reserving for India's own use the Tata output until the end of the year, to the War Office, with a letter supporting the Government of India's contentions. The War Office, without replying to the letter or suggesting a conference to discuss the question, had submitted it simultaneously to the War Cabinet and Eastern Committee.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the dispute in question was a further argument for the establishment of unity of military command which was a question which had been more than once before the Committee.

The Chairman said that the larger question of unity of command had been temporarily dropped owing to the entirely altered military situation in the Middle East, but could be taken up again whenever the Committee desired.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *That the question of the output of Indian rails should be referred to the India Office and War Office for mutual settlement; and*

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(b.) *That the Director of Military Intelligence should investigate the circumstances in which the War Office referred the matter to the War Cabinet and Eastern Committee without replying to the communication which had been addressed to them on the subject by the India Office.*

Our Policy in Persia.

4. The Committee had before them the following papers: E.C.–1703, 1718, 1727, 1765, 1767 1774, 1847, 1898, 1904, 1910, 1936, 1942, 1946, 1947, and 1948, on the subject of our policy in Persia.

The Chairman said that he did not ask the Committee that afternoon to continue their discussion on the desirability or otherwise of a Persian alliance. Sir P. Cox, on the 1st October, in his telegram 856 (E.C.–1774) (Appendix A), had made certain suggestions and also asked for guidance as to the line he should take with the Persian Government when he next saw the Shah or his Prime Minister. In a later telegram (E.C.–1946) Cox had asked for an early reply as he was to visit the Shah at the end of the week. He further said that there was a good deal of intrigue going on against the Persian Cabinet which it was important to nip in the bud. This telegram had been followed by another dated the 15th October (E.C.–1942) asking for the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to the following:—

(*a*) Now that peace seemed to be in sight America would soon revert to the status of a neutral power *vis-à-vis* Persia; would American officers be preferable to Swiss if Persia would accept them, or is the entry of America into Persian politics not desirable?

(*b.*) In the event of Persia not being admitted to the Peace Conference, as she hopes, did we wish to represent her interests?

The Chairman said that we had also information to the effect that the Turks were trying to bribe Persia by offering Azerbaijan to the Shah's eldest son.

Lord Robert Cecil referred to a Foreign Office telegram No. 422 of the 14th August (E.C.–1175), stating that, in view of the unsatisfactory attitude of practically all the Swedish officers in Persia, we could not entertain the idea of repeating the experiment of utilising them with the South Persia Rifles; we had, however, considered the possibility of American officers for the gendarmerie in the future, and we wished to know what Sir Charles Marling thought of this proposal. To this Marling had replied in his telegram 716 (E.C.–1262) that Vossugh maintained a very strong preference for Swedish officers; that he rejected the idea of a Persian chief with British staff, and that he objected to American officers both on account of his experience of the Schuster Mission and Colonel Merrill, and because America had lost much of her popularity and influence since she had entered the war. Lord Robert said that when this question had last come before the Committee they had agreed among other things to oppose the suggestion of a Neutral Commission, and had decided that owing to the possibilities of Turkey coming out of the war, no definite action was required on our part at present.

The Chairman then read out the decisions reached at the 33rd Meeting of the Committee (Minute 4).

Colonel Gribbon said that, as regards Azerbaijan, the War Office attached considerable importance to Turkish activities in that province. In reply to a question he said that His Majesty's Government had already given an undertaking to Persia to clear the Turks out of that province.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that it seemed now that the War Office had guaranteed to clear Azerbaijan of the Turks without asking for anything in return, whereas he himself, when pressing for an

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alliance with Persia, had always been told that even an alliance was not worth the price involved in giving such a guarantee. He suggested that if Cox were to be instructed to come to terms with the Persian Government he must stand out for *quid pro quo*, *e.g.*, he must insist on Wassmuss and other enemy agents being got rid of. As regards the South Persia Rifles, we had again and again said that we wished to get rid of them, and we had also said that we would agree to French-Swiss or American officers. He deprecated dealing with these matters piecemeal, and urged the time had now come to complete the whole business.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *To defer the final decision until the Foreign Office had prepared a paper describing the sequence of events in respect of our policy in Persia for their consideration.*

(b.) *That the Foreign Office should prepare, for the approval of the Committee, a draft telegraphic reply to Sir P. Cox indicating the line he was to take generally and the assurances which we were prepared to give to Vossugh, and instructing him in the meanwhile not to commit himself.*

Ibn Saud.

Mr. Shuckburgh stated that information had been received ftom Mr. Philby, dated the 5th October (E.C.–1892), that Ibn Saud had made a vigorous attack upon Ibn Rashid, and had reached Hail, but had failed to take the town or to capture Ibn Rashid. Ibn Saud had now retired to a place approximately 150 miles from Hail. Meanwhile hostilities had again broken out at Khurma, where it would seem that the Sherifian forces were the aggressors and had been defeated.

Mr. Montagu said that these telegrams threw a new light upon the situation in the centre of Arabia. Ibn Saud had moved against Ibn Rashid, and was getting rifles from the Hejaz by leakage. He therefore recommended that the 1,000 rifles which had been promised by us to Ibn Saud, and which are known by the latter to be lying at Koweit, should now be delivered.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that while he was willing that Ibn Saud should be given the tents for which he was asking, he was reluctant to furnish him with any more arms.

The Chairman thought that in view of the new situation in Syria there was no longer the same objection to the issue of the promised 1,000 rifles.

General Smuts agreed with this view.

Sir Mark Sykes hoped that Ibn Saud would be thanked and congratulated on his efforts against Ibn Rashid, and requested to open the caravans across Arabia.

The Committee decided—

(1.) *That a congratulatory message should be addressed to Ibn Saud, accompanied by an explanation that, in the altered military situation, we no longer required further active military assistance from him;*

(2.) *That the 1,000 rifles lying at Koweit should be supplied to him;*

(3.) *That the Government of India's proposal to supply him with tents should be approved;*

(4.) *That all other proposals to supply him with arms, aeroplanes, &c., should be disallowed.*

The India Office to take action accordingly.

Syria: Proposed Joint Anglo-French Declaration.

The Committee had before them a memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes (E.C.–1944), containing the draft declaration to be issued jointly by the British and French Governments in order to give

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effect to Clause III of the Provisional Arrangement in regard to the territory occupied by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force drawn up at the Conference held at the Foreign Office on the 30th September, 1918.

General Smuts and Mr. Montagu both took exception to the wording of the proposed declaration in regard to the proviso limiting the declaration against annexation by the two Governments or in the event of the inhabitants of the countries desiring annexation by a third Power. It was felt that these qualifications might be very ill received by the Arabs, especially at this moment.

Sir Eyre Crowe, on the other hand, stated that he would very much regret having the hands of the British and French Governments tied by any statement to the effect that we would in no case annex any part of the areas in question. As an instance of the inconvenince of being so tied, he quoted the case of Muscat, where we were bound by an Anglo-French Declaration more than half a century old against annexation.

Mr. Montagu felt that in addition to the fears which the declaration as drafted might raise in the minds of the Arabs, they would have a very bad effect upon President Wilson.

General Smuts feared that, unless the wording of the Declaration was changed it might be possible for the situation to be so manipulated by future Governments as to bring about annexation.

The Committee decided to adjourn further discussion of the Draft Declaration to a special meeting of the Committee to be held at 10·30 A.M. the following morning.

(*The Committee resumed the discussion of the draft Joint Declaration at* 10·30 A.M. *on October* 17, 1918.)

Lord Robert Cecil read a new draft in French, which had been drawn up by Sir Eyre Crowe in consultation with Sir Mark Sykes. The main difference between the new Draft and that which the Committee had before them on the previous day lay in the excision of any negative declaration against annexation by inserting in its place a positive statement in favour of the establishment of independent rule.

Sir Eyre Crowe stated that under the new Drafts if Turkey or Germany tried to impose a protectorate or to annex the areas in question, our hands would be free to annex or take any steps we thought fit. In the original Draft we had introduced a definite statement against annexation in order (1) to quiet the Arabs, and (2) to prevent the French annexing any part of Syria.

The Chairman expressed the view that there was some substance in the argument in favour of our safeguarding the position as far as third parties were concerned. When he was Viceroy of India trouble had arisen from the action of the French at Muscat, which was only settled by the despatch of a British warship to that place.

Mr. Montagu stated that unless the Draft contained a declaration against annexation in any form, and contained no provisos or conditions, he would prefer to have no declaration at all. We did not wish at this juncture to blazon to the world that we were against self-determination under certain circumstances.

Sir Mark Sykes drew attention to the words inserted by the French Government "proprement arabes." These words had been inserted by the French Government instead of the geographical definitions suggested in Lord Robert Cecil's original Draft. There was some fear that the French Government might construe the words "proprement arabes" as not applying to the Lebanon.

The Chairman thought that it would be best to limit the application of the declaration to Syria.

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Lord Robert Cecil said that this would be impossible, and that unless we made a self-denying declaration in regard to Mesopotamia the French would not make a similar declaration in regard to Syria.

General Macdonogh urged that extreme care should be taken in regard to the geographical names selected, should geographical definition be decided upon. The important question was to secure a definition which would be understood by the Arabs. Syria was a somewhat loose geographical expression. According to some, Syria included Palestine; while according to others, Syria was confined to the Turkish vilayet of that name, which would exclude the vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut, and also the Lebanon. Galilee and Samaria, which were parts of Palestine, were in the vilayet of Beirut.

Sir Mark Sykes stated that the proper Arabic names of the various provinces might be found in Mr. Guy l'Estrange's book entitled "The Provinces of the Abbasid Caliphate."

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the best way would be to define the areas by means of a map. This, however, would not easily be utilised for fulfilling the main object of the declaration, which was generally to reassure the Arabs.

General Smuts stated that he did not think the amended Draft would prove altogether satisfactory to the Arabs, as the Draft spoke of the British and French Governments establishing local native administration. Our duty was to make it clear to the Arabs that the initiative lay with them and not with us, and that they were free to set up whatever form of Government they chose.

The Chairman thought that the opening sentence of the declaration made it perfectly clear that this was our intention, and that our object was to ensure that effective native Governments should be established by the free choice of the people themselves.

In regard to the question of geographical definition, he thougt that the words "toutes les régions libérées de la domination turque en Syrie et en Mésopotamie" might he substituted for the words "proprement arabes."

General MacDonogh stated that any mention of annexation or protection was dangerous, and that King Hussein was very nervous lest he be accused by the Arabs of bartering their birthright and placing Mohammedans who had hitherto been under Mohammedan rule under Christian rule.

The Chairman stated that the important thing was to put Arab independence in the forefront of the declaration, and to bring in any reference to the French and British Governments later,

Sir Eyre Crowe suggested the insertion of the word "appui" instead of the word "protection" in the French Draft. This was agreed to by the Committee.

After further discussion the Committee decided—

To recommend the deletion of the sentence containing the provisos regarding annexation in certain contingencies as likely to arouse suspicion, and requested the Foreign Office to prepare another Draft in the light of the above discussion, emphasizing the Arab rights and claims, which should be submitted to the French Government for their concurrence after approval by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee.

Future Government of the Middle East.

(*b.*) With reference to Minute 2 of the Thirty-fourth Meeting, the Committee took note of a letter from Lord R. Cecil to M. Pichon, covering a draft Memorandum on the subject of the future government of the Middle East. (E.C.–1915) (Appendix (B).)

Proposed British Mission to Syria.

(*c.*) The Committee had before them a Note by the Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, covering a Memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes, suggesting the despatch of a British Mission to Syria. (E.C.–1943) (Appendix (C).)

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The Committee decided—

That the question should be left for decision by an informal conference consisting of Lord Curzon, Mr. Montagu, Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Mark Sykes, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (or his representative), to meet in Lord Curzon's room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, the 21st October, 1918, at 3 P.M., the necessary papers to be collated, and submitted to the conference by the Secretary of State for India in concert with the War Office.

Suggested Unification of Military Command in Middle Eastern Theatres of War.

7. With reference to Minute 3 of the Thirty-second Meeting, Mr. Montagu stated that he had telegraphed privately to the Viceroy, in reply to the latter's telegram of the 1st October (E.C.–1803), asking whether the prospect of an early Turkish capitulation affected the Government of India's views as to the unity of command in the Middle East. The Viceroy had replied that, after consulting the Commander-in-Chief, he still pressed (for reasons stated) for an early decision on the subject.

The Committee decided—

That the discussion of the question should be resumed at the earliest opportunity, when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff could be present.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
October 17, 1918.

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APPENDIX (A).

E.C.–1774.

Sir P. Cox to Foreign Office.

(No. 856.) *October* 1, 1918.

Your telegram No. 511, 27th September.

Assumption in first paragraph is correct. News of Allenby's (? victory) has since been made good use of, but it is too early yet for its effect on public to be apparent. As far as Ministers and Shah are concerned, it has considerably relieved their apprehensions of any further Turkish advance in immediate future; so also has visit of Chief of General Staff at Bagdad, who was here yesterday and was able to tell Prime Minister that no less than one-third of Turkish forces in Caucasus and Persia were being withdrawn westwards as result of Palestine victory, and that our own garrisons at Enzeli, Zinjan, &c., had been reinforced and were now confident of their ability to maintain their positions.

With reference to concessions proposed, I note (1) and (2) are attempted. As regards (3), I suggest it might be stated that transfer of South (? Persia) Rifles to Farman Farma will be made as soon as two Governments are satisfied that Bushire shipping trade route viâ Kazeroon is open to traffic, and security, and condition of province generally and safety of foreign representatives and interests are assured by F.F.S. arrangements.

As regards Commission of neutral officers. There is no opposition to French-Swiss. May I say that we shall claim to be consulted in regard to their (? selection)? Ministers made a great point of being able to make known intention to form this Commission in order to convince public of our serious intentions. I explained at the time that it would be inconvenient to have the Commission here during the (? war) but they urged in reply that selection and journey to Teheran of officers would take a long time and essential thing was statement to public. Would it suffice if we were to agree by exchange of semi-official notes to take leisurely steps for selection and despatch of Commission? In any case we could stipulate that neutral officers should not be sent to the south until end of war or until we consent to their going. Meanwhile, they would have plenty to do north, in drawing up their scheme and dealing with northern gendarmerie who are now commanded by Swedes but are much under officered. I have had no further discussions with Ministers on above questions since my telegram of the 23rd September, and will await your reply before resuming them.

As regards suggestion for recognising zone or line across which parties would not operate. Point which you emphasised was fully appreciated, and Minister specially warned that for that reason it would not be possible for us to withdraw our troops in any case. I regret to learn, however, that in moment of panic and without consulting with me further, Persian Government have despatched a protest to Constantinople protesting at (group undecipherable). Persia and especially at neighbourhood of the capital being thus invaded and urging (group omitted)s to withdraw from Persian territory, and saying if they complied they would urge us to do the same.

The understanding between myself and Ministers was that they should discuss proposals with Cabinet and Shah as necessary, and I should refer to Government, and that we should then resume negotiations. In reply to my remonstrances Prime Minister explained that what had happened was that Governor-General at Tabriz, who has recently been allowed (group omit) by the Turks and arrived here, brought to the Shah and Cabinet alarming reports to the effect that Turks had every intention of advancing in force on Teheran, and would be here (? within a) month, and matter seemed to be so urgent that no time was to be lost, and so it was decided to send this protest. He continued that Persian Government had done the same two or three times before, and as it did not commit us in any way it did not seem to him that our pourparlers enhanced prejudice in any way.

I am sorry this should have occurred, but I fully understand there can be no question of our withdrawing. Would it not be feasible, however, as far as Kermanshah Enzeli line is concerned to agree upon a zone which parties would not cross?

Addressed to Foreign Office 956. Repeated to India.

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APPENDIX (B).

E.C.–1915.

Future Government in the Middle East.

Copy of a Letter from Lord R. Cecil to M. Pichon covering a Draft Memorandum.

(Secret.)
Dear M. Pichon,

IN reference to the affairs of Syria of which you spoke to me to-day, I have great pleasure in sending you the annexed memoradum to which the Prime Minister agrees. It has not yet been approved by the Cabinet, and until that has taken place it must be treated as to that extent provisional.

Yours very sincerely,
(Initialled) R. C.

Draft Memorandum.

British Embassy, Paris, October 8, 1918.

His Majesty's Government are prepared to accept the arrangement reached at the Conference held at the Foreign Office on the 30th September upon the understanding that it is to be treated solely as providing for the situation caused by the recent advance of General Allenby's force into Syria, and is to be deemed to refer only to the territories occupied, or to be occupied, by that force.

With regard to the future government of the other territories mentioned in the Anglo-French Convention of 1916, His Majesty's Government think it right to point out that the general position has so much changed since that agreement was entered into that its provisions do not in all respects appear suitable to present conditions. Not only has the military position in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria completely altered, but two political changes of vast importance have taken place. The United States have come into the war and Russia has gone out. It is manifest on the one hand that America cannot be ignored in any settlement of the future of these countries, and particularly of Syria and Palestine. And on the other the arrangements contemplated for the north-eastern part of Armenia have been completely upset by the collapse of Russia. A further difficulty is caused by clause 9 of the Treaty of London, which recognises the claims of Italy in connection with the Eastern Mediterranean. The provisional suggestions made at Saint-Jean de Maurienne for meeting these claims have lapsed, and, indeed, would in any case be difficult now to enforce without protests from Greece and even from Turkey. While calling attention to these points His Majesty's Government feel that it would be useless to attempt a settlement of them at the present moment, and they suggest that they should form the subject of fresh conversations in which the Governments of Italy and the United States, as well as the French and British Governments, should be invited to take part.

(Signed) ROBERT CECIL.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
October 12, 1918.

E.C.–1943.

APPENDIX (C).

I circulate the following to my colleagues on the Eastern Committee. The suggestion appears to me timely and useful.

(Initialled) R. C.

Foreign Office, October 15, 1918.

Memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes.

In accordance with your request, I beg to submit the following memorandum on our conversation this afternoon.

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The rapid development of the Syrian campaign confronts us with a number of rather difficult and delicate problems, and I believe that the best use that could be made of me at present would be to send me out to Syria to perform the following duties :—

1. Subject to the authority of General Allenby, to organise the Anglo-French liaison on political and administrative affairs in Syria proper and in the area of General Allenby's operations, exclusive of Palestine.

2. Subject to the same authority, to assist in promoting good relations between Arabs and French; and, further, to discuss with General Allenby and report on the question of modifying the present military administration now in force in Palestine with a view to preparing the ground for a provisional civil administration on the termination of hostilities; to discuss both with the Mesopotamian authorities, Sir R. Wingate, and General Allenby, and report on the possibilities of co-ordinating our Arab policy on the Palestinian side with our policy in Mesopotamia in view of the much closer relations which must sooner or later be established between the populations of these two areas as the result of our advance.

October 15, 1918.

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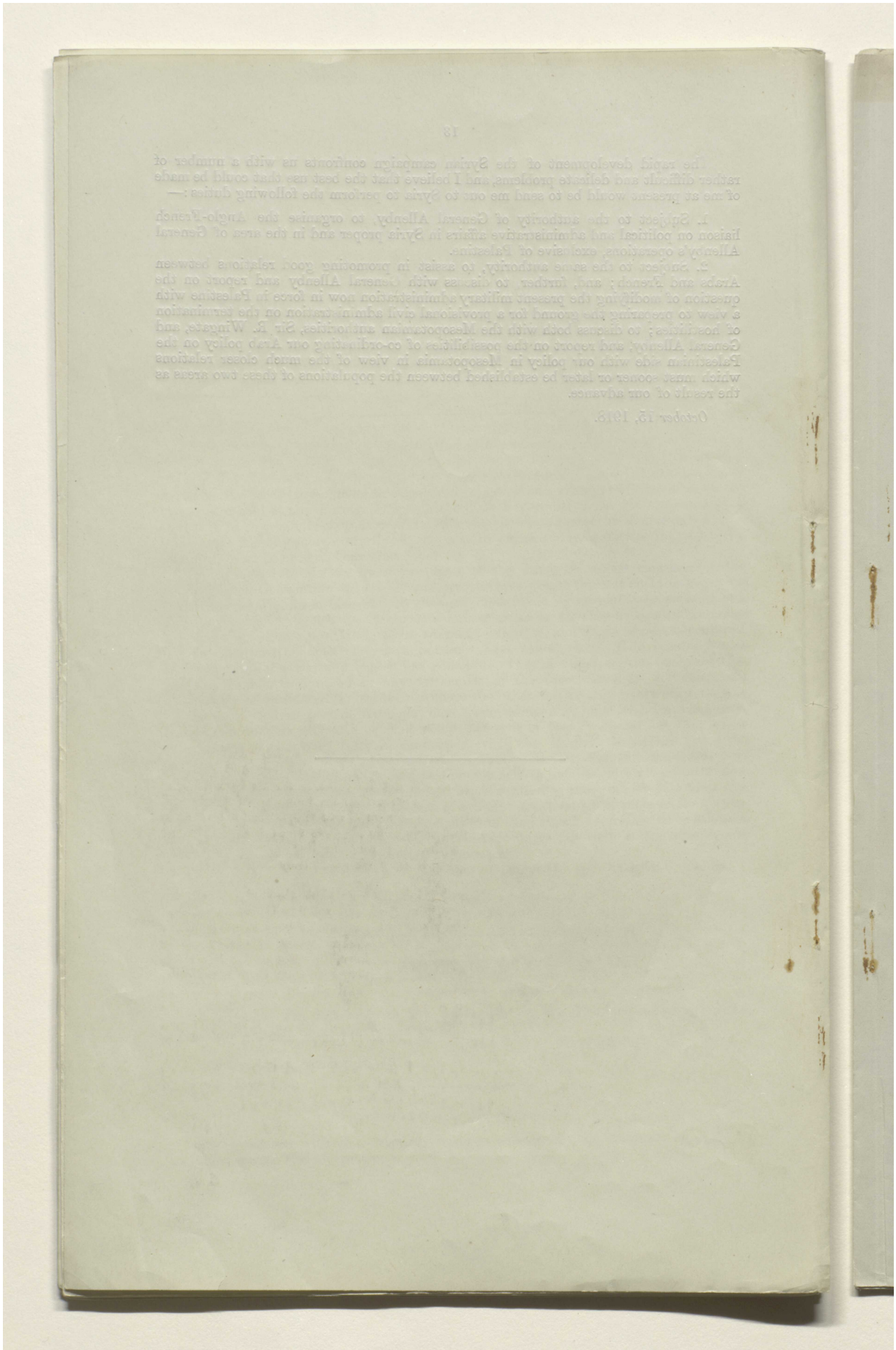

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Lord Curzon (143)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. November 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 36th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, October 24, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

The following were also present:

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office.

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., *Assistant Secretary*.

Distribution of Eastern Committee Papers.

1. The Chairman stated that he wished to appeal to all the Departments to observe the instructions that had been agreed upon with regard to the distribution of papers dealing with the questions which come before the Eastern Committee. Each Department should send copies to the Chairman and the Secretary. Instances had arisen where the Chairman had received a copy of a telegram or document which the Secretary had not received. *Vice versâ*, the Secretary had received documents which had not simultaneously been sent to the Chairman. The Chairman should receive an advance copy of all papers direct from the Departments in addition to the copies circulated for distribution by the Secretary. He instanced as examples of failure to carry out this system the fact that the paper on "Policy in Persia," together with the draft telegram to Sir Percy Cox, had been sent to the Secretary on the previous evening without a copy being sent by the Foreign Office to the Chairman. Further, he had received two telegrams from the War Office with regard to the situation at Aden which had not been sent to the Secretary. The work of the Committee could only be properly discharged by the Secretary and himself if both received copies of all papers at the moment of their issue.

Mr. Montagu stated that there were certain documents affecting the East in general, and the area covered by the Eastern Committee in particular, which were circulated to the War Cabinet, but not to

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him. He made no complaint in this connection of the Foreign Office, but he did not receive many of the important papers from the War Office and the Admiralty, except through the Secretary of the War Cabinet and the Eastern Committee. He instanced more particularly telegrams and papers dealing with the situation *vis-à-vis* Turkey as it affected Aden and Arabia.

The Chairman considered that the best course for Mr. Montagu to pursue would be to take the matter up with the Secretary of the War Cabinet.

Unification of Military Control in the Middle East.

2. With reference to the 35th Meeting (Minute 7), the Committee had before them the Viceroy's telegram of the 1st October, 1918 (E.C.–1803), and a note by the General Staff, dated 14th October (E.C.–2047, Appendix (A)), on a proposal for unity of command in the Middle East.

The Chairman said that, in the unavoidable absence of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he did not propose to invite the Committee to consider this question at this meeting. He had spoken to the C.I.G.S. that morning, and General Wilson had urged that, in view of the altered circumstances since the project had first been mooted, there was no longer the same necessity for securing unity of command, and that the proposal might, therefore, be shelved. In this view the Chairman said he himself concurred, and he had received a letter from General Macdonogh to the same effect.

Mr. Montagu referred to representations that he had made at the previous Meeting, when he had informed the Committee that the Viceroy still pressed for an early decision on the subject.

The Committee decided—

To confirm the decision they had reached at their previous Meeting, that the discussion of the question should be resumed as soon as the C.I.G.S. could be present.

Syria: Proposed Mission.

3. The Committee had before them a note by Lord R. Cecil, covering a memorandum by Sir Mark Sykes, dated the 15th October (E.C.–1943—35th Meeting, Appendix C); a note by the War Office entitled "Political Service in the Middle East," dated the 22nd October (E.C.–2042); a draft telegram to General Allenby (E.C.–2074), copies of which were circulated at the Meeting; and certain other papers and telegrams bearing on the situation in Syria which had been circulated since the last Meeting (E.C.–1971, 1999, 2006, 2017, 2043, 2044, 2051, 2053, and 2054).

Lord Robert Cecil stated that the present proposal to despatch a mission to Syria arose out of Sir M. Sykes' memorandum. It appeared that considerable difficulties had arisen between the Arabs and the French, and he thought that Sir Mark Sykes could be usefully employed in endeavouring to compose those difficulties. He might, at the same time, collect information regarding the requirements of any further political staff now required in the areas occupied by General Allenby. He attached great importance to smoothing over the present strained relations between the Arabs, the French, and the English.

General Thwaites stated that it should be clearly understood that Sir Mark Sykes was proceeding to Syria as representative of the Foreign Office, paid by the Foreign Office.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, Lord Robert Cecil said that the discussion of a new agreement between the French and ourselves, with regard to the Middle East, was altogether outside the purview of Sir Mark Sykes' mission, and would be taken up at a later date by the Governments at home.

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After some discussion the Committee decided—

(a.) *To approve the draft telegram to General Allenby in the amended form as given in Appendix "B."*
(b.) *To defer the discussion of the War Office paper, "Political Service in the Middle East" to a future Meeting.*

Mr. Montagu suggested that no reference to Mesopotamia be made in the telegram to General Allenby or Sir Mark Sykes' instructions, but that a telegram should be sent to Colonel Wilson, at Bagdad, informing him of Sir Mark Sykes' mission, and suggesting that he should meet Sir Mark Sykes either at Damascus, Bagdad, or some other place convenient to Colonel Wilson. He further requested that the telegram to General Allenby, which the Committee had approved, should be repeated to the General Officer Commanding in Mesopotamia.

The Committee approved these recommendations.

Aden.

4. The Chairman stated that our position at Aden still appeared to be somewhat ignominious. For more than three years the Turks had been in possession of the greater part of the British territory round Aden, and he had several times spoken to the former Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who had always declined to provide the troops because of more important military requirements in other spheres. Lately, however, the War Office appear to have contemplated taking more active measures, but, on further enquiry from our representative at Aden as to the amount of additional forces required, they had again postponed taking action.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that he understood that a number of people were of opinion that if the Turks were not driven out of Lahej by force before the end of the war, our prestige in Southern Arabia would be seriously affected after the war.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that the Turk was the only Power in occupation of British territory, and whereas President Wilson had refused to consider the question of an armistice with Germany except on condition of the evacuation of occupied Allied territory, and whereas Bulgaria had been forced to evacuate Serbia, it would be disastrous if like conditions were not imposed upon our Mahommedan and Asiatic enemy.

General Thwaites stated that the point had not been overlooked in considering the terms of an armistice with Turkey. With regard to the present situation, the Resident at Aden had asked for a reinforcement of three to four battalions, as the minimum necessary to drive the Turks out of the Aden Protectorate. After careful consideration, the General Staff had decided that the diversion of freight which such a reinforcement would entail, was not justifiable. A local reconnaissance towards the enemy's left flank involving a few casualties had taken place some fifteen miles from Aden on the previous day, in which Somali Hill had been taken and held. The prosecution of this reconnaissance towards Mahatt was ineffective.

The Committee took note of the information given.

Mesopotamia: Future Administration.

5. With reference to the 34th Meeting (Minute 2) the Committee had before them a note by the Political Department, India Office, dated the 21st October, entitled: "Administration of Mesopotamia" (E.C. 2030), and Sir P. Cox's Memorandum, dated the 22nd April, 1918 (E.C. 173).

Mr. Montagu said that it had been his intention that the India Office departmental note, which had issued somewhat prematurely,

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should be accompanied by draft terms of reference. He asked that the discussion of the question should be deferred until these had been circulated.

The Committee decided—

To defer the discussion until members were in possession of the draft of the Secretary of State for India.

Transcaspia: Military Situation.

6. The Chairman said that since the last Meeting a number of rather confused telegrams in regard to the military situation in Transcaspia had been circulated to the Committee, and he invited the Director of Military Intelligence to inform the Committee what was the exact position at the present moment.

General Thwaites described the position with the aid of a map. He said that some 500 men of General Malleson's force were now at Tejend. Reinforcements to the extent of one battalion with two guns were at Krasnovodsk available to reinforce General Malleson. Opposed to our troops in Transcaspia were some 7,000 Bolsheviks, who had recently attacked and had been driven back with considerable loss by Malleson's force. Further east there were about 40,000 prisoners of war, whose headquarters were at Tashkend.

Lord Robert Cecil enquired what was the object of maintaining a force under General Malleson. He understood that it had been sent forward when there was a danger of German and Turkish troops crossing the Caspian.

General Thwaites said that the primary object of General Malleson was to protect the Transcaspian Railway. He pointed out that the 5th Caucasian Turkish division, numbering about 6,000 men, were still at Baku, and that there were about 7 German battalions and a proportion of other arms about Tiflis.

The Chairman said that the object of maintaining Malleson's force was threefold, (*a*) as pointed out by General Thwaites, to secure the Transcaspian Railway, (*b*) to protect the frontier of Persia from a Bolshevist invasion, which might have very serious effects, and (*c*) to prevent enemy movements eastwards reacting upon Afghanistan. The Chairman said that he had been rather alarmed at a proposal which had been put forward by General Malleson in one of his recent telegrams, that his force should push up to the Oxus. He thought that this proposal should not be countenanced, as it was most desirable to restrict our offensive operations in that theatre.

Mr. Montagu pointed out that an additional object of Malleson's force was to intercept German and Turkish troops and agents who might be attempting to penetrate to Afghanistan.

The Committee thought that the operations of General Malleson's force should be confined to as restricted an area as the circumstances allowed.

Caspian Situation.

7. With reference to the thirty-third Meeting, Minute 3, the Chairman referred to a telegram which the Admiralty had sent to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies (E.C.–1664, Appendix 2, to Minutes of thirty-third Meeting), in which instructions had been given to Commodore Norris, in the event of his not being able to obtain possession of the armed Caspian fleet by other methods, to embark on a campaign of capturing or sinking all Caspian ships, both armed and unarmed, which might refuse to work under our orders. Recent telegrams indicated that we had secured, and were proceeding to arm, a certain amount of Caspian shipping, and, in the circumstances, he thought that the rather drastic instructions to Commodore Norris to destroy the Russian vessels which were said to

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be under the orders of General Bicharakoff might be modified or cancelled.

The Committee decided—

To instruct Lord Robert Cecil to see Admiral Hope on their behalf with a view to a withdrawal of the order to destroy all ships in the Caspian.

Persian Policy: Instructions to Sir P. Cox.

8. With reference to the 35th Meeting, Minute 4, the Committee had before them a note by Lord Robert Cecil, dated the 22nd October (E.C.–2037—Appendix "C" covering (*a*) a memorandum by Mr. Oliphant; and (*b*) a draft telegram to Sir P. Cox in reply to his message No. 856 of the 1st October (E.C.–1774)).

The Chairman said that he thought that the draft telegram admirably expressed the views of the Committee as to the instructions that should be sent to Sir P. Cox. He had, however, one or two suggestions and alterations to put before the Committee for their consideration. In paragraph 7 (2) of the draft, he suggested the addition of the following words, "so far as we are concerned we have no intention of attempting to revive it." In the paragraph immediately following he would prefer to substitute for "be entitled to veto the appointment of any future Governor-General of Fars," the words "be consulted before any future Governor-General of Fars is made."

In paragraph 9 for "the suggestion that Great Britain should represent Persia at the Conference seems open to the objection that this would have the appearance of our assuming the rôle of Protecting Power," he would substitute "as regards the suggestion that Great Britain should represent Persia at the Conference, this seems open to misinterpretation, as it might have the appearance of our assuming the rôle of Protecting Power, which we do not desire. But we shall be ready, in every way, to act at the Conference as the friend of Persia and to protect her political and territorial independence. If the Persian Government desire to place before us their views as to the way in which these objects can best be secured, we shall be glad to receive any representations they may care to address to us on this point." Paragraph 10 might then run, "We have indeed already given an assurance—see my telegram No. 539 (of 16th October)—that His Majesty's Government would not entertain any proposal that might be made by Turks regarding cession to Turkey of any Persian territory in Azerbaijan.

"I should be glad to receive your observations on above points."

Mr. Montagu said that he agreed with the proposed alterations. We had already decided to hand over the South Persia Rifles to Firman Firma, and he himself, as he had often stated to the Committee, was most anxious that we should be relieved of this force as soon as possible. He saw no useful purpose in troubling the Committee with a reiteration of his views.

The remaining members having signified their concurrence in the Chairman's proposed amendments,

The Committee decided—

To approve the draft telegram in its amended form (Appendix D).

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.1.,
October 24, 1918.

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APPENDIX (A).

E.C.–2047.

Some Notes on a Proposal for "Unity of Command in the Middle East."

1. "UNITY of command" implies operations against a common military objective, which may be an army or a locality.

When the proposals for a unified command were made the theatres in question were those in which we were fighting the Turks, or into which pan-Mohammedan influence might penetrate. Turkish activities depend ultimately on the security of the Turkish capital, which is now directly threatened from the Salonica front. The centre of gravity of the Middle East has therefore shifted to the Balkans, and operations in Mesopotamia and in Palestine are now merely subsidiary. Consequently it would be illogical in present circumstances to form any unified command in the Middle East which did not include General Milne's force.

2. The Commander exercises his authority, firstly, by the issue of orders or instructions for the initiation of certain operations; and, secondly, when those operations are in progress, mainly by the employment of his general reserve.

In planning his operations he must consider the following factors amongst others:—

(i.) What is known of the enemy and of the country.
(ii.) The forces available for his operations.
(iii.) The transport and maintenance of those forces.
(iv.) The most convenient position for his general reserve to meet possible eventualities, and the means of transporting it.

To fulfil his functions, therefore, the commander must have:—

(i.) A complete Intelligence system.
(ii.) Unrestricted disposal of all troops in the theatres for which he is responsible.
(iii.) An accurate knowledge of the general situation as regards railway and marine transport, reinforcements in men and horses, ammunition and supply, as affecting his operations.
(iv.) If the bases from which his various forces are operating are not connected by land he must have absolute control of sufficient shipping to move his reserves between his theatres as and when he wishes.

3. Briefly, the above mean that the proposed commander in the Middle East would require a staff complete in all its branches, thus reduplicating the War Office, and if he is effectively to control the situation he must have a pool of personnel and transport resources, more particularly shipping, independent of his theatres. As the War Cabinet is aware, at the present time our margin is too small to enable us to lock up a single locomotive, lorry, or ship, which is not being fully employed, as the proposal would involve, and all the resources of the Empire must loyally be pooled, and placed at the disposal of one main distributing centre.

4. We know from experience that operations in any one theatre are affected by success or failure in every other theatre, and that the Middle Eastern theatre, including the approaches to India, is not an exception to the rule. The situation is constantly changing, and only the authority which controls all theatres and all resources can at any given moment judge of the relative advantages of allotting such resources for any particular operation. In the War Cabinet we have such an authority, which, through the various Government departments, has an exact knowledge of all the many factors affecting the situation, both naval, military, and political. This organisation is "unity of control" in its highest form. Its decisions are conveyed by the War Office to the commanders in the field, who are its executive officers, and to place any intermediate authority between them and the War Office is merely to insert into the existing machinery an unnecessary cog-wheel with its unavoidable co-efficient of friction.

General Staff, October 14, 1918.

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APPENDIX (B).

Draft Telegram to General Allenby.

(To be deciphered by Personal Staff.)

OWING to rapid development of your campaign, which confronts both British and French Governments with number of problems, the Foreign Office desire to send Sir Mark Sykes on temporary political mission to Syria.

With your concurrence and proviso that Colonel Sir Mark Sykes will be subject to your authority, and submit his reports through you, it is proposed to give him the following instructions :—

(*a.*) Report on requirements of political staff.
(*b.*) Advise with regard to co-ordination of Anglo-French political liaison from point of view of Eastern Committee and with regard to recent undertakings exchanged between French and British Foreign Offices.
(*c.*) Assist in promoting good relations between Arabs and French.
(*d.*) Enquire and report on the question of eventual introduction of provisional civil administration in Palestine when military situation permits.

I hope that you will agree with above as Sykes is aware of latest developments *vis-à-vis* Paris and may be useful to you.

Please let me know if you suggest any modifications to above instructions.

APPENDIX (C).

E.C.–2037.

I CIRCULATE to my colleagues a memorandum prepared by Mr. Oliphant at my request, and also a draft telegram to carry out the policy settled at the last meeting of the Eastern Committee.

(Initialled) R. C.

Foreign Office, October 22, 1918.

MEMORANDUM.

AT the end of 1917 anarchy reigned in Persia; Bolshevist and enemy propaganda was making great headway; and the situation throughout the country was most precarious.

Sir C. Marling expressed the view that the only means whereby we could maintain a friendly Cabinet in power would be at the price of agreeing to cancel the 1917 Agreement, to admit Persian representatives to the eventual Peace Congress, and to place the South Persia Rifles under neutral officers. He added, however, that in the long run we should have to be dependent on a show of force.

In March it was finally decided by His Majesty's Government to send troops into Persia, and Sir C. Marling was instructed to inform the Persian Government accordingly. Owing, however, to a phenomenal winter and the consequent impossibility of moving troops through the passes, it was not until June that any adequate force arrived in Persia.

Later, the Turks occupied Tabreez and advanced through a large part of Azerbaijan, and, moreover, British forces had eventually to leave Baku. His Majesty's Government, therefore, being without any material assets, found it more than ever necessary to secure the return to power of Vossugh-ed-Dowleh and a friendly Government, and with a view to supporting them negotiations and conversations were continually carried on at Teheran regarding the disposal of the South Persia Rifles, which since their institution remained an eyesore to the Persians, as being to all intents and purposes a British force.

Such was the situation in August that Vossugh-ed-Dowleh again raised the question of the employment of neutral officers with the force, as his own position in the

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Sir C. Marling: Tel. 690, Aug. 10.

country made him consider that some immediate settlement was imperative. He accordingly urged that His Majesty's Government should consent to the employment of Swedish officers.

It was pointed out to Sir C. Marling in reply that, in view of the past experience of His Majesty's Government of Swedish officers, they could not entertain the idea of repeating the experiment, but if Sir C. Marling approved, and thought the moment

F.O. tel. 422 of Aug. 14.

opportune, he might, in conversation with the Prime Minister, suggest the employment of American officers.

Sir C. Marling: Tel. 716, Aug. 19.

Sir C. Marling then reported that the Prime Minister very strongly preferred the selection of Swedes. His Highness rejected the suggestion which had been made of a Persian figure-head with Colonel Stokes as his Chief of Staff, and added that, after his experience of the Shuster Mission, he personally objected to the suggestion of the employment of American officers. His Highness added that America had lost popularity since she joined Great Britain and Russia in the war. He stated that if we accepted Swedish officers his own position would be made easier, and that our interests would be assured by the careful selection of officers. Meanwhile, if we agreed to this, and the South Persia Rifles were ostensibly under the general orders of Farman Farma, he thought the matter could be temporarily shelved.

F.O. tel. 442.

We informed Sir C. Marling that, in view of the past, the idea of Swedes was still very unwelcome to His Majesty's Government, and as a counter suggestion we proposed the selection of Norwegian or French-Swiss; or that the South Persia Rifles should be made a purely Persian force.

Sir P. Cox: Tel. 856, Oct. 1.

Sir P. Cox stated on the 1st October that, as regards the employment of neutral officers there was no opposition to French-Swiss. He suggested informing the Persian Government that we shall claim to be consulted in regard to their selection, and also suggested means whereby the arrival of such neutral officers should be deferred, and in any case, not sent to the South until after the war.

On this telegram, to which no reply has yet been sent, Sir E. Crowe pointed out that if we accepted the Commission of Swiss officers we should remain definitely bound to the scheme of a Swiss officered, British-paid, Persian force. He recalled attention to the previous example of the Swedes, and to our experience of Dutch officers in Albania, and urged strongly that we should do nothing in this matter, but instruct Sir P. Cox to make every conceivable pretext for putting the matter off.

Lord R. Cecil said that, sooner or later it was essential to decide on the direction of our policy in Persia, *i.e.*, protectorate or independence. If the latter, some means must be found for giving to the Central Government at Teheran a force for preserving order, which will not be a British force. He saw no device except neutral officers for that purpose.

(Initalled) L. O.

18*th October*, 1918.

Draft telegram to Sir P. Cox (Teheran.)

(No. .) *Foreign Office, October* , 1918.

YOUR telegram No. 856 of 1st October.

Whole question of future relations of His Majesty's Government with Persia has been carefully considered.

Guiding principle must be the permanent maintenance of British influence in country bordering on Indian Empire, not any temporary expedient to meet a sudden and passing emergency. With this object, His Majesty's Government are anxious to see in Persia a Government friendly to them, and as competent as is possible, and they regard Vossugh-ed-Dowleh as a suitable Minister. It is not, indeed, so important now as it was a few weeks ago to secure his services in that position. Then he seemed the only alternative to an administration definitely hostile to this country. Now that is probably not true. Still we should decidedly regret his disappearance from office.

In these circumstances His Majesty's Government are not convinced that there is any justification for entering into agreement such as that proposed in respect of the South Persia Rifles, which might eventually turn out not to be in the best interests either of Persia or this country.

There are obvious objections to acceptance of an arrangement whereby the gendarmerie paid by us is officered by another nation, and our experience of foreigners in Persia has not been reassuring.

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We are therefore reluctant to press forward to an immediate decision the question of introducing foreign officers at a moment when it does not seem absolutely necessary for us to commit ourselves definitely.

On the other hand, His Majesty's Government are ready, in order to strengthen the position of Vossugh-ed-Dowleh's Cabinet, or any Persian Government actively friendly to us, to make such other proposals with a view to the permanent improvement of the relations between the two countries as may safely be made.

To this end you are authorised to inform the Prime Minister that

1. Great Britain reiterates categorically her determination to respect the independence of Persia.

2. She undertakes as soon as a Russian Government exists which she can recognise, to press for abrogation of Anglo-Russian Convention, and in the meanwhile regards it as being in suspense.

The suggested transfer of the South Persia Rifles to the Governor-General of Fars is in itself attractive, but is rendered rather difficult of acceptance in view of the fact that Farman Farma's tenure of that office appears precarious (see last paragraph of your telegram No. 883 of the 14th October). But if some guarantee could be given that we should be entitled to veto the appointment of any future Governor-General of Fars, we would gladly consider the transfer of this force.

As regards the desire of Persia to be represented at the Peace Conference, it will clearly be impossible to make in her favour an exception to the principle on which the Allies are acting towards other non-belligerent nations. The suggestion that Great Britain should represent Persia at the Conference seems open to the objection that this would have the appearance of our assuming the rôle of a Protecting Power.

We have, however, recently given an assurance (see my telegram No. 539 of the 16th October) that His Majesty's Government would not entertain any proposal that might be made by Turks regarding cession to Turkey of any Persian territory in Azerbaijan. His Majesty's Government would also be prepared to discuss with Persian Cabinet how Persian interests should be generally safeguarded at the Peace Conference, and possible understanding whereby His Majesty's Government would engage not to agree at Conference to any territorial or other arrangement affecting Persian interests except on lines acceptable to Persia, and in accordance with promise of His Majesty's Government to respect Persia's independence.

I should be glad to receive your observations on above points.

(Repeated to India.)

(Initialled) R. C.

APPENDIX (D).

Mr. Balfour to Sir P. Cox.

(No. 556.)
(Telegraphic.) *Foreign Office, October* 24, 1918.

YOUR telegram No. 856 of the 1st October.

1. Whole question of future relations of His Majesty's Government with Persia has been carefully considered.

2. Guiding principle must be the permanent maintenance of British influence in country bordering on Indian Empire, not any temporary expedient to meet a sudden and passing emergency. With this object His Majesty's Government are anxious to see in Persia a Government friendly to them, and as competent as is possible, and they regard Vossuk-ed-Dowleh as a suitable Minister. It is not, indeed, so important now as it was a few weeks ago to secure his services in that position. Then he seemed the only alternative to an administration definitely hostile to this country. Now that is probably not true. Still we should decidedly regret his disappearance from office.

3. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government are not convinced that there is any justification for entering into agreement such as that proposed in respect of the South Persia Rifles, which might eventually turn out not to be in the best interests either of Persia or this country.

4. There are obvious objections to acceptance of an arrangement whereby the gendarmerie paid by us is officered by another nation, and our experience of foreigners in Persia has not been reassuring.

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5. We are therefore reluctant to press forward to an immediate decision the question of introducing foreign officers at a moment when it does not seem absolutely necessary for us to commit ourselves definitely.

6. On the other hand, His Majesty's Government are ready, in order to strengthen the position of Vossuk-ed-Dowleh's Cabinet or any Persian Government actively friendly to us, to make such other proposals with a view to the permanent improvement of the relations between the two countries as may safely be made.

7. To this end you are authorised to inform the Prime Minister that—

(1.) Great Britain reiterates categorically her determination to respect the independence of Persia.

(2.) She undertakes as soon as a Russian Government exists which she can recognise to press for abrogation of Anglo-Russian Convention, and in the meanwhile regards it as being in suspense. So far as we are concerned we have no intention to renew it.

8. The suggested transfer of the South Persia Rifles to the Governor-General of Fars is in itself attractive, but is rendered rather difficult of acceptance in view of the fact that Farman Farma's tenure of that office appears precarious (see last paragraph of your telegram No. 883, of 14th October), but if some guarantee could be given that we should be consulted before any future appointment of a Governor-General of Fars is made, we would gladly consider the transfer of this force.

9. As regards the desire of Persia to be represented at the Peace Conference, it will clearly be impossible to make in her favour an exception to the principle on which the Allies are acting towards other non-belligerent nations. The suggestion that Great Britain should represent Persia at the Conference seems open to the misinterpretation that this would have the appearance of our assuming the rôle of a protecting Power. We desire to act at the Conference as friends of Persia, and we shall be ready in every way we can to safeguard her political and territorial independence. If Persian Government desire to place before us their views as to the way in which these objects may best be attained, we shall be glad to receive any representations that they may wish to address to us on this point.

10. We have, indeed, already given an assurance (see my telegram No. 539 of 16th October) that His Majesty's Government would not entertain any proposal that might be made by Turks regarding cession to Turkey of any Persian territory in Azerbaijan.

11. I should be glad to receive your observations on above points.

(Repeated to India.)

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Lord Curzon

(148)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. November 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 37th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Tuesday, October 29, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The following also attended:

Lieut.-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

SIR MARK SYKES, Bt., M.P., Foreign Office (for Minute 1).

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office

Lieut.-Colonel T. E. LAWRENCE, C.B., D.S.O. (for Minute 2).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P. (*Assistant Secretary*).

Mission of Sir Mark Sykes to Syria and Palestine.

1. LORD ROBERT CECIL asked for the recommendation of the Eastern Committee on two points connected with Sir Mark Sykes' proposed visit to Syria and Palestine. First, he recommended that the Treasury be asked to authorise the issue to Sir Mark Sykes of an entertainment allowance to cover any expenses which he might deem it necessary to incur in bringing together the representatives of various communities met with in the course of his journey. Secondly, he requested that during the absence of Sir Mark Sykes, Major Ormsby-Gore should be lent to the Middle Eastern part of the Foreign Office to take over the duties performed by Sir Mark Sykes.

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He hoped that the Eastern Committee would submit this request to the Secretary of the War Cabinet.

The Committee approved the above recommendation of Lord Robert Cecil.

Views of Colonel T. E. Lawrence on Arab Policy.

2. The Chairman, in welcoming Colonel Lawrence to the Committee, stated that he and every member of His Majesty's Government had for some time past watched with interest and admiration the great work which Colonel Lawrence had been doing in Arabia, and felt proud that an officer had done so much to promote the successful progress of the British and Arab arms. He understood that as Colonel Lawrence had accompanied Emir Feisal on his recent entry into Damascus, he could give information regarding the views that were entertained by the Arab chiefs concerning the settlement of the conquered territories and Franco-Arab relations in particular.

Colonel Lawrence stated that he had left Emir Feisal in possession of Damascus on the 4th October. Feisal was honest and straightforward, and a man of considerable capacity. He was extremely pro-British, and had always worked and would always work in the closest co-operation with General Allenby, for whom he had a genuine admiration. His future attitude depended on how far we backed up French claims in the East. The French representatives had made it perfectly clear to Feisal that they intended to build up a colonial empire in the East, and although neither he nor his father had ever been given a copy of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1916, he was familiar with its terms, as these had been widely published by the Turks among the Arab tribes. However, Feisal and the Arab leaders relied upon our declaration of March 1918, which had been given to seven Syrians in Cairo regarding the disposal of all territory actually captured by Arab arms. In this declaration we had promised unlimited Arab sovereignty for such areas. He had been handed copies of the two documents by Nuri Shalaan, the chief of the Roalla, who had pointed out to him their mutual inconsistency, and he (Colonel Lawrence) had replied to the effect that he presumed that the later of the two documents would be regarded as binding.

As regards the position of the King of the Hejaz in Syria, Feisal and his supporters in Syria desired a constitutional régime in Syria, and his father's temporal authority did not extend to any part of Syria. In fact, the only position given to the King of the Hejaz in Syria consisted in the insertion of his name in the Friday prayers in all mosques as Emir-el-Homenin. Similarly, the King of the Hejaz would have no position other than this in any part of Mesopotamia.

The difficulty was due not so much to the personality of the King of the Hejaz as to that of his eldest son Ali, who is a rather narrow and pious Sunni, whereas the other sons of the King of the Hejaz are crypto-Shiahs. Colonel Lawrence's own idea was the establishment of Abdulla as ruler of Baghdad and Lower Mesopotamia, Zeid in a similar position in Upper Mesopotamia, with Feisal in Syria.

In regard to Upper Mesopotamia, whence most of the best officers and men in Feisal's army had been drawn, he was convinced that a separate province or kingdom would have to be established distinct from Lower Mesopotamia and from Syria. The boundary between Upper and Lower Mesopotamia would run from the confluence of the Tigris and the Zab to Ana on the Euphrates, from which place to Birijik the Euphrates would form the western boundary of the province. The northern boundary would lie through Urfa and Diarbekr to the Tigris. The capital of this province would be either Mosul or Ras-el-Ain. This country was inhabited by Arabs and Arabic-speaking Kurds. The Kurds would join any local autonomous State provided it were backed by the

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British. They would, however, reject the French. Further, whoever controlled Lower Mesopotamia must also control the upper waters of the Euphrates, as it would be possible to utilise the whole of the water of the Euphrates for irrigating the plain of Aleppo by drawing it off between Birejik and Rakka. The Arabs of North Mesopotamia were distinguished for their extreme nationalism, and they had deduced from the attitude of the French during this war, wherever they had come into contact with them, that the French were inimical to the Arab movement for national independence. The French were getting into Syria under General Allenby's wing, and although he did not like it, Feisal would probably be content to leave Beirut and the Lebanon to French tutelage provided that there was no question of French annexation. Tripoli is the part which the Arabs will make a fight for, as Tripoli is the natural railway existing from Arabia to Syria, and the Tripoli–Homs railway is the only Syrian railway with real commercial possibilities. The Beirut–Rayak or Haifa–Damascus railway could not compete with it. The Arabs wanted a footing in the Bay of Alexandretta at Arsus, and Colonel Lawrence thought that no one Power should have exclusive control of this bay. He suggested that Adana, Mersina, and Port Ayas might form part of an Armenian State. The Arabs would welcome such a State in Cilicia. There had been no Armenian massacres during the war in Aleppo or Syria, owing to local Arab influence, which had prevented their occurrence. There were a large number of Armenian refugees in different parts of Syria. The Armenians were now very much scattered, and only formed an insignificant percentage of the population in the six so-called Armenian vilayets. He therefore thought that the Armenian State where the Armenians could collect should be near to the sea and modest in size.

Colonel Lawrence stated that he understood from M. Picot, whom he had met in Rome on his way back, that the French intended to impose French advisers upon Feisal. Feisal took the view that he was free to choose whatever advisers he liked. He was anxious to obtain the assistance of British or American Zionist Jews for this purpose. The Zionists would be acceptable to the Arabs on terms.

At the request of the Chairman, Colonel Lawrence undertook to furnish the Committee with a memorandum on the various points touched upon.

Caspian Situation.

Naval Flag to be flown by Shipping under British Control.

(3.) The Committee had before them a telegram from the Senior Naval Officer, Baghdad, No. 30, of the 20th October (E.C. 1993).

Admiral Hope said the point on which he asked the instructions of the Committee was raised in the latter part of the above telegram—"ships armed by order are at present flying Russian naval flag, and this is politically sound, but, as soon as definite break does take place, white ensign will be hoisted and action taken." He said that, when the naval party had been sent up to Enzeli to endeavour to get hold of part, at any rate, of the Caspian fleet, the intention was that any warships that came into our hands should fly the white ensign. Were there any special political reasons now why such ships should continue to fly the Russian flag?

Lord Robert Cecil said that at the 36th Meeting of the Committee (Minute 7), the Committee had decided to instruct himself to see Admiral Hope on their behalf with a view to the withdrawal of the order to destroy all ships in the Caspian. He had accordingly seen the Admiral and they had agreed that, if any warships approached, which were not in our hands, we should inform them that they must either surrender to us or be sunk. This, however, would not apply to merchant shipping. The Admiral himself had

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then drafted a telegram to this effect to be sent to the Senior Naval Officer.

Admiral Hope then read the draft telegram.

General Macdonogh thought that the time had come to reconsider our position as regards the Caspian Sea and whether it was still necessary to secure control of the shipping.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that Enver was reported to be intending to retire to the Caucasus, and to set up a separate Azerbaijan State. In view of this, the control of the Caspian was still essential. Moreover, it was possible that General Alexieff might still succeed in setting up an independent State north of the Caucasus, in which case the control of the Caspian would be of importance to us, unless the Allied troops operating from another direction managed to secure the Black Sea. It was possible that Enver might try and revive the Pan-Turanian movement. He thought that we were bound to sink any ship on the Caspian which refused to obey our orders.

The Chairman thought that there was sufficient reason for retaining control of such shipping as had come into our hands, but that arguments for sinking ships under the control of Bicharakoff were not so convincing. He suggested that a telegram should be sent to the S.N.O. saying that, in view of the changed circumstances at Constantinople, our policy now, while preventing any hostile movement or action in the Caspian, was to suspend previous instructions to sink vessels which were controlled by Bicharakoff.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that the telegram might be to the effect that previous orders were cancelled; that our object was to interrupt any movement of hostile intent into Trans-Caspia; and that if any warships attempted to interfere with such measures as we might adopt to achieve this object they were to be sunk.

Mr. Montagu said that he understood that this would not apply in the case of Russian merchant ships transporting troops across the Caspian. This would be an unfriendly act on the part of ships which were not warships.

General Macdonogh pointed out that one of Bicharakoff's reasons for retaining the fleet was to enable him to co-operate with General Denikin who was friendly to us. He thought that the instructions it had been suggested should be sent to the Senior Naval Officer constituted an unjustifiable interference in the internal affairs of the Russians and might upset Denikin's plans.

Lord Robert Cecil thought that General Denikin was bound to keep us informed of his plans so that he could act in concert with us.

Admiral Hope referred to a later telegram from the G.O.C.-in-C. Mesopotamia, X. 3407 (E.C. 2109) which stated that the North Persian Force had received a telegram from Bicharakoff asking for 12 ships, of which the majority were at Enzeli; a reply had been sent that owing to the scarcity of oil fuel these ships were immobile, and that should Bicharakoff still press for these ships the North Persian Force would refuse to send them.

General Thwaites urged that nothing should be done which would alienate Bicharakoff.

General Macdonogh said that the principal reason why we wished to control the Caspian shipping was to prevent hostile movement across Trans-Caspia and Turkestan from threatening India. Now this menace had been removed our *raison d'etre* on the Caspian no longer existed.

The Chairman said he was opposed to sinking ships just because they did not happen to be in our hands. It was, however, still necessary for us to control the Caspian, and consequently we must take measures to stop vessels which might be moving with hostile intent.

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The Committee decided ;—

That the Admiralty should send the following telegram to the Senior Naval Officer, Baghdad, the contents of which should be communicated by the War Office to the G.O.C.-in-C., Mesopotamia :—

"In view of the change of circumstances the orders contained in A.T.–1458 of the 24th September are modified as follows :—

"Our object now is to retain such control of the Caspian Sea as to enable us—

"(1) to prevent any communication by water with hostile object between its shores.

"(2) to assist any forces friendly to us.

"No armed ships should be sunk unless they show hostile opposition to this policy, and no merchant ships should be captured unless they are in your opinion acting in interests contrary to ours.

"If G.O.C. Mesopotamia has no decided objection, ships armed and manned by us should fly white ensign.

"War Office are informing G.O.C. Mesopotamia of this change in Admiralty policy."

Political Service in the Middle East.

4. The Committee had before them a Memorandum by the War Office (E.C.–2042) and a note by the India Office (E.C.–2079) regarding the formation of a Political Service in the Middle East.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that it was very desirable that the whole of the Middle East, Egypt, and Mesopotamia inclusive, should be under one control. Such control should, in his view, be centred in a separate Department of the Imperial Administration, which should be neither the India Office nor the Foreign Office, but would be in close touch with both Departments. He had now formed a separate Middle Eastern Department in the Foreign Office, which Department could eventually be transferred from the Foreign Office to the new Department. For the moment, so many of the questions in the Middle East had an international bearing, such as French claims in Syria and North Mesopotamia, that it was necessary, for the time being, to retain the Foreign Office control. He hoped, however, that at an early date it would be possible to develop the Middle Eastern Department at the Foreign Office into a joint concern with the Middle Eastern Section of the India Office. We were now approaching a definite stage when the purely military administration of occupied enemy territory would have to be replaced by a civil administration, and it was most important to secure unity of control in civilian as in military matters. It was impossible to create a new Civil Service *de novo*, and, to begin with, the new Civil Service would have to be recruited from the Indian Political Service, the Foreign Office, and the Egyptian and Soudan Civil Services. He was convinced that it was undesirable to keep Egypt under the Foreign Office. Diplomatic training did not make good administrators, and the diplomats who had undertaken service as administrators in Egypt were not improved as diplomatists. The future services of the Middle East would be mainly concerned with administration, and only secondarily with diplomatic work. As far as he had been able to ascertain, everyone in the Egyptian service, other than the diplomats, were in favour of the change he advocated, but this Egyptian service suffered from being too small, and from the absence of life and movement.

Mr. Montagu stated that while he agreed with Lord Robert Cecil in principal, and shared his view regarding the desirability of the formation of a new Middle Eastern Department separate from both

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the Foreign Office and the India Office, he saw considerable objections to the War Office proposal to place the Mesopotamian Service under the Foreign Office *pro tem.* The Government of India had administered Mesopotamia with great success, and would regard the transfer of their duties to the Foreign Office as something in the nature of a slight.

The Committee decided :—

That the Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary for India should draw up a scheme embodying joint proposals for their consideration.

Mesopotamia: Future Administration.

5. The Committee had before them a Note by the Political Department, India Office (E.C.–2030), and a Paper entitled, "Draft Instructions for the Commission," by the India Office (E.C.–2104, Appendix A), on the future Administration of Mesopotamia.

The Chairman said that the idea of a Commission to visit Mesopotamia to examine the administrative problem on the spot originated with Sir P. Cox, and had recently been revived by Captain Wilson, in his telegram of the 27th September, 1918. This proposal had been strongly objected to by the Government of India who, in the Viceroy's telegram of the 6th October (E.C.–1831, Appendix B), had said that they considered the proposal altogether premature, and stated that they would earnestly deprecate reference to a Commission, constituted as suggested, of several questions vitally affecting Indian interests. The India Office and the Foreign Office, however, appeared to favour the proposal, and had submitted Draft Instructions approved by both Departments. The case for the Commission seemed to be that if the President of the United States, at the Peace Conference, should put difficulties in our way in regard to Mesopotamia, it might be useful for us to say "We have an excellent scheme already in working order there; did he propose to up-set what was already established?"

Mr. Montagu pointed out that the two papers in question were not substantive documents, but were only intended to focus discussion. As regards the Commission, there were two conflicting views, those held by Captain Wilson, and those of the Government of India. He thought, however, that in point of fact the Indian Government were more opposed to the choice of subjects proposed for the Commission's investigations than to the actual scheme.

Lord Robert Cecil said that he was most strongly in favour of the project of sending a Commission. We wished to carry out a policy which we hoped to concert with the French in regard to all the territories covered by the Draft Instructions. We were faced with an extraordinarily difficult proposition in the solution of which the advice of an authoritative Commission, which had examined the problems on the spot, would be of great assistance. He had that day spoken to a man back from the Middle East, who said that the establishment of an Arab Government presented an almost insoluble problem.

General Smuts said he agreed with the Indian Government that the proposal was premature at this stage. The Commission could only go out in order to work out the details of a policy which must be laid down in London. That policy, however, was at present nebulous and fluid. The Draft Instructions were very far-reaching, and he would specially instance Instruction 4, which he maintained could certainly not be decided by a small Commission.

Lord Robert Cecil said that it would take some time before the Commission could get to work. He doubted if they would

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really start business for another three or four months, by which time our policy should be determined.

The Chairman referred to Instruction 5 (iii) regarding the future status of the Mosul vilayet, which Wilson had recommended should be under the same administration as Baghdad. The Committee had, at that Meeting, heard from Colonel Lawrence that Mosul might very likely not be under Baghdad administration at all. All these matters depended upon our relations with Hussein, Feisal, and others, with whom the Commission would not be in communication, and could not, therefore, be settled by it.

Lord Robert Cecil thought there was no reason why the Commission should not be able to consult the Arab Chieftains. There were, moreover, many other very important questions such as hydraulics, the control of the upper reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris, the course of trade, &c., in regard to which the advice of the Commission would be valuable. He argued that it would certainly be necessary, sooner or later, to despatch a Commission to Mesopotamia in order to collect geographic, politic, and ethnographic data on which the Government could form a judgment. At present, everyone who returned from Mesopotamia seemed to take a different view as to what should be done. The Arabs were already uneasy and anxious to know what we proposed to do, and he thought it dangerous to delay a decision as to our future policy. To assist in framing that policy he strongly urged that a Commission, consisting of three persons, one a man experienced in Indian administration, a second experienced in local conditions, and a third as head of the Commission, a Statesman with experience of governmental and political considerations should be sent out as soon as the right men could be found. The main object of the Commission should be to advise as to the right kind of administration to adopt in Mesopotamia.

General Macdonogh said that as Adjutant-General he was particularly interested in Instruction 5 (iv), as it was necessary for him to know, as early as possible, what garrison it was proposed we should maintain in Mesopotamia after hostilities ceased. India seemed to understand that she would be asked to provide a certain number of native troops, but he wished to know whether he would be required to supplement these with British troops.

Mr. Montagu confirmed that India fully understood that she would be asked, for the time being, to provide a native garrison. As regards Mosul, he thought it most important that the Committee should make up their minds exactly what they meant to do with this vilayet. He agreed with Lord Robert that without the proper information it was impossible for us to decide upon our economic policy; for instance, the question of opening banks and so on.

The Chairman said that at present he saw serious objections to the proposal. If the Commission were sent out, the fact would become public, questions would be asked in Parliament, and our Allies would be exceedingly suspicious. They would say "you propose, at the Peace Conference, to confront us with a *fait accompli*." He did not agree with Mr. Montagu that the Indian Government were more opposed to the choice of subjects than to the scheme itself. That Government had raised many other objections. What the Committee had just heard from Colonel Lawrence showed that the orientation of Middle East affairs had recently entirely changed. He, himself, thought that the proposed instructions to the Commission went much too far, and he believed that a Commission of this kind would only prejudice our case at the Peace Conference; it would hamper and not help us.

General Macdonogh said that Colonel Lawrence himself admitted that his experience did not extend east of the Tigris, and he could not say whether the Kurd tribes on that side of the river should come into the Arab State.

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Lord Robert Cecil thought that this was an additional argument for the Commission.

General Smuts agreed with the Chairman that it would be impossible to conceal the fact of such a Commission, and this would get us into difficulty both at home and with our Allies.

The Committee decided, Lord Robert Cecil dissenting, not to pursue the matter at present.

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
29th October, 1918.

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APPENDIX (A).

E.C.-2104.

MESOPOTAMIA.

Draft Instructions to Commission.

(Circulated by India Office).

1. HIS Majesty's Government have decided—

(i.) That no part of the occupied territories in Mesopotamia shall in any circumstances be restored to Turkey.

(ii.) That no part of it shall be annexed to the British Crown.

2. The policy of His Majesty's Government is to set up an indigenous Arab administration or administrations to govern with British assistance the area included in the Turkish vilayets of Basra and Baghdad.

The main object that His Majesty's Government have in view is the progressive development of the country under Arab Government administered in Arabian interests, and as far as possible through an indigenous agency, in accordance with local ideas.

3. The foreign relations of the new State will be conducted by the British Government.

4. It is for consideration what relation, if any, the ruler or rulers of the Mesopotamian State or States shall bear towards the King of the Hejaz, and what position, if any, the State or States shall occupy in the confederation of Arab States, supposing such a confederation to be brought into existence.

5. His Majesty's Government desire to give the Commission a wide discretion in conducting their investigations, rather than to tie them down to particular lines of enquiry. The following, however, are some of the points to which special attention may suitably be directed :—

(i.) *Port of Basra.*—Some special measure of administrative control may be necessary in the town and port of Basra. Its position as a port of call for ocean-going steamers, and the large sums expended by the British Government on port improvement, place it in a different category from the rest of the occupied territory.

(ii.) *Jurisdiction over Europeans.*—It will probably be necessary to keep this in exclusively British hands. The provision of courts that will command the confidence of Europeans is a corollary to the policy of encouraging British firms to interest themselves in the country.

(iii.) *Mosul vilayet.*—The question of the future status of the Mosul vilayet will have to be considered. Captain Wilson has recently argued in favour of placing Mosul under the same administration as Baghdad.

(iv.) The question of the future strength, disposition, &c., of *British troops in* Mesopotamia is reserved for discussion with the Government of India. But His Majesty's Government would be glad of a provisional expression of the Commission's views on this point.

(v.) *Economic and Agricultural development.*—His Majesty's Government attach special importance to this, and desire to encourage British firms of high standing to interest themselves in the country. They consider, however, that progress in this direction should be carefully regulated in accordance with the capacity of the Arab population to keep pace with it. They would be opposed, for example, to any measure necessitating the importation of foreign labour on a considerable scale.

6. The Commission will consider and report to His Majesty's Government on the best means of giving practical effect, at as early a date as possible, to the policy outlined above.

The following additional paragraph is also circulated for consideration :—

8. It is essential at all times, and more particularly during the initial stages, that British control over the new administration should be as complete and effective as

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possible. Otherwise, in Sir P. Cox's words, "the country has no future, for it would be impossible to get money for its development unless investors are satisfied that their interests are fully safeguarded, a condition which cannot be assured except under protective British supervision."

APPENDIX (B).

E.C.-1831.

From Viceroy, Foreign Department.

(Received 7th, 8 P.M.)

(Secret.) *October* 6, 1918.

MESOPOTAMIA administration.

Reference to Baghdad telegram No. 8075, dated 27th September.

We consider proposals altogether premature, and that no useful purpose would be served by despatch of a Commission at this stage. Anyway we should strongly deprecate reference to a Committee so constituted of several questions vitally affecting Indian interests. In particular as the authority that will presumably find the garrison hereafter, we should not agree to such a Committee advising on size, composition and location of such garrison. Further proposed subjects for Committee's consideration are a strange medley of large Imperial and local administrative questions. Former must obviously stand over, while, as regards latter, if advice is necessary, we could perhaps depute an officer or officers of administrative experience to advise.

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Lord Curzon (153)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. December 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 38th Minutes. 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, November 21, 1918, at 3·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury.

Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. LAWRENCE, C.B., D.S.O.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Major the Hon. W. ORMSBY-GORE, M.P., *Assistant Secretary*.

Caspian Situation.

1. THE Chairman said that in the course of the last week or so matters had developed rapidly and satisfactorily. On the 16th instant a telegram (E.C.–2357) had been sent to Generals Marshall, Allenby, Thomson, Malleson, and others, asking them to announce that the Government's policy was to police the area between the Caspian and the Black Seas, as may be required to maintain order and enforce the terms of the armistice, pending final settlement at the Peace Conference of various territorial questions involved. A telegram from General Marshall, dated the 18th instant (E.C.–2378), stated that the previous day General Thomson had disembarked at Baku and had met with a good reception. The telegram did not say where Bicharakoff was, or whether the occupation of Baku was solely British. As regards Bicharakoff, a telegram dated the 15th instant from Colonel Blair, Vladivostock, stated that Colonel Nielsen had wired from Omsk on the 11th November to the effect that Bicharakoff's detachment near Petrovsk was subsidised by the British until he could get into touch with the Russians, and recommending that the subsidy should be continued. The Chairman said he thought that Colonel Nielsen was too far

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from the scene of action to form a correct judgment in respect of the continuance of Bicharakoff's subsidy.

Mr. Keynes said that Bicharakoff had been paid up to the 15th ultimo only.

Admiral Hope said that a telegram had just been received to the effect that Bicharakoff, with six armed ships, was at Baku.

General Thwaites stated that our force at Baku consisted of three battalions and a field battery.

Lord Robert Cecil said that it had been decided that morning at the War Cabinet that we should send a division to Batum to hold the Baku–Batum Railway. There was, of course, a danger that this move might involve us in further extensive operations.

General Thwaites stated that the reason why it was desirable to send a division up to the railway was that we should be able to open up a much better line of communication than the Hamadan–Enzeli line, and it would give us a better control of the Caspian. The Divisional Commander would be instructed merely to hold the line, and not to embark on extensive operations in that area.

Mr. Montagu asked whether the new line was an alternative, or merely supplementary, to the Hamadan–Enzeli line.

General Thwaites said that it was an alternative line, to be used as soon as the new line was established; the Hamadan line in winter was practically impassable. It was not, however, proposed to evacuate Enzeli, and the construction of the Khanikin–Hamadan Railway would not be abandoned.

(At this point Admiral Hope withdrew.)

Our Policy in Persia:
(*a.*) Question of a Financial Adviser to the Persian Government.

2. The Committee had before them the following telegrams which had passed between the Foreign Office and Sir P. Cox: E.C.–2191, 2293, 2361, and 2395.

The Chairman thought that the Committee would desire to express their strong approval of the line taken by the Foreign Office. There could be no question, as His Majesty's Government were exclusively supplying the financial resources by which Persia was being kept on her legs, that if a financial adviser were appointed he should be a British subject.

(*b.*) Persian Representation at the Peace Conference.

The Committee had before them a number of telegrams which had passed between the Foreign Office and Sir P. Cox (E.C.–2086, 2137, 2138, 2192, 2263, 2347, 2362, 2401), and a telegram from the Viceroy, dated the 1st November, to the Secretary of State for India (E.C.–2200).

The Chairman said that it was not quite certain from Sir P. Cox's telegrams what was really at the back of the mind of the Persian Government in wishing to be represented at the Peace Conference. If it was merely a desire to satisfy their *amour-propre*, this was an intelligible and harmless aspiration. He feared, however, that it was more likely that they wished to raise at the Conference the whole question of their independence, and especially the question of the Persian Gulf. There was a danger that they would seek admission to the Conference under the ægis of the British Government, and on admission would discard this and endeavour to play off the various Powers against each other.

Lord Robert Cecil said that his Department did not wish in any way to encourage the Persians to come to the Conference. He thought, however, that we could put them off by saying that it was not for the British alone to decide whether or not they should be admitted, as this was a matter which must be determined by the Allies generally. We had, indeed, offered to assist Persian interests at the Conference, but this had elicited no reply. Proceeding, Lord Robert said that President Wilson apparently contemplated a Conference of all neutrals, in view of a League of Nations; he

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doubted whether the President quite realised what this involved. He himself doubted the advisability of defining at all precisely at the Conference what we proposed to do in Persia, as he disliked unnecessary definitions in international matters.

Mr. Montagu asked whether it would not be possible for us at the Peace Conference either (*a*) to arrange to clear out of Persia altogether, which he thought was impossible, or (*b*) get a mandate to remain there. He felt it was most desirable that our position in Persia should be regularised, that is to say, we should be empowered at the Conference to control Persian administration for a stated period, or, failing this, that we should clear out. He himself hoped that it might be possible for us to adopt more or less the line indicated by Sir P. Cox.

The Chairman thought that the matter would probably solve itself. What we wished to do was to prevent Persia from falling into chaos. It was evident that the Judson Mission were much impressed by what we had done and were doing in Persia, and we might be certain that Dr. Judson would not fail to communicate his impressions to the President. As regards Mr. Montagu's suggestion, that we might seek power at the Conference to control Persian administration for a certain number of years, he himself felt that a limited mandate was dangerous. He would prefer that Persian matters should not be raised at the Conference at all. At the same time, in view of the likelihood of their being raised, we ought to be prepared with our brief.

The Committee decided—

That the Foreign Office should prepare a paper for the Committee's early consideration on the subject of Persian affairs and Persian representation at the Peace Conference.

(*a*.) Position of Sir P. Sykes.

The Committee had before them telegrams from Sir P. Cox, dated the 23rd September (E.C.–1658) and the 29th October (E.C.–2137), a telegram from the Viceroy, dated the 9th October (E.C.–2093), Foreign Office telegram to Sir P. Cox, dated the 31st October (E.C.–2140), and a note by the India Office, dated the 16th November (E.C.–2384, Appendix I).

The Chairman said that Sir P. Sykes' position had all along been ambiguous. It was evident, however, from the Viceroy's telegram of the 1st November that the Indian Government intended to stand by him. In view of this, he did not propose to ask the Committee to pursue further the question of the wisdom of Sir P. Sykes' actions and policy. The note by the India Office before the Committee suggested that the best way out of the present difficulty would be to summon Sykes to London for the purpose of consultation.

Mr. Montagu thought that it was most desirable in the circumstances to get Sir P. Sykes out of Persia. He still felt that Sykes had never satisfactorily explained his original action in entering Soulat's territory.

Mr. Shuckburgh, in reply to a question from the Chairman, said that so far as his Department knew our troops had not yet reached the hills. They were believed to have reached Daliki, but had got no further. Sir P. Cox had been informed (E.C.–2140) that, subject to the safeguards suggested in his telegram No. 856 (E.C.–1774) and to the additional reservation as to the Governor-General of Fars, he might proceed at once with the assurances proposed in regard to handing over the South Persia Rifles as soon as he was satisfied that the roads to Shiraz were open and the surrounding country was settled.

The Committee decided—

To approve the action suggested in the India Office note.

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Situation in Trans-Caspia.

3.—(*a.*) The Committee had before them a number of telegrams and papers regarding the situation in Trans-Caspia, including the following: E.C.–2105; a note by the India Office on "Present Situation and Future Action in Turkestan" (E.C.–2179. Appendix II; E.C.–2252, 2279, 2281, 2299, 2308, 2309, 2325, 2326, 2338, 2349, 2353, 2373—Appendix III, and 2374).

The Chairman said that the situation in Trans-Caspia had developed considerably since the Committee had last met. General Malleson had pushed on to Merv, to which move the Indian Government had at first demurred. The matter had been referred home, and eventually the Government of India had agreed, for the time being, to allow him to remain at Merv, subject to the reservation that he was not to advance beyond it or south of it. The question of the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to Bolshevism had been discussed at a meeting of the War Cabinet the previous week, and the decision then taken had been communicated by the Secretary of State for India in a telegram to the Viceroy, dated the 15th November (E.C.–2373. Appendix III). This telegram laid down, among other things, that Malleson should occupy Merv as long as the military situation necessitated it, but British or Indian troops should not be employed east or south of that place. In the light of the above, the Indian Government had been invited to reconsider their orders not to reinforce Malleson. He (the Chairman) did not share the fears of the Indian Government as to the occupation of Kushk by Malleson's force. The Ameer, he felt sure, would far sooner have Indian troops there than Bolsheviks, and he would have been disposed to support Malleson's policy in its entirety.

Financial Aid to the Trans-Caspian Government.

(*b.*) The Committee had under consideration three telegrams from the Viceroy, dated 13th, 19th, and 20th November respectively (E.C.–2372, 2402, and 2426—Appendix IV).

The Chairman said that the question of financing the Trans-Caspian Government had been discussed by the Committee at their 35th Meeting (Minute 2) on the 17th October, when the Committee decided—

> "That the India Office should instruct Malleson that the change in the general situation rendered our previous policy of keeping the Trans-Caspian Government going of doubtful value, and he should therefore be strictly on his guard against committing himself to spending money; he should further be informed that His Majesty's Government did not in any case contemplate any issue of notes or the establishment of a local currency."

The most recent telegram before the Committee, which had only just been received, stated that, while Trans-Caspia's monthly expenditure was 16,000,000 roubles, they had no means of raising revenue until a stable Government was installed, owing to trade stoppage and inability to impose taxes; that there were only two methods which were likely to produce money—(*a*) to sell bank drafts on India for rupees, or on London for sterling, in order to tempt larger holders of depreciated roubles to make them available; (*b*) Malleson to be authorised to collect rouble notes against a promise to pay in silver rupees three months later, that there was a good deal of money in the country which was hoarded in small quantities; and, finally, that, if His Majesty's Government decided to give the financial assistance asked for, the supply from India of the specie required was out of the question, and the Indian Government could not undertake to meet rupee drafts on India.

Mr. Keynes said that the Treasury were not clear as to the purpose for which it was proposed to maintain and finance the Askabad Government. The sum asked for to-day was a quarter of a million sterling, but a total of one million sterling would eventually be required. The rouble currency was at present in a ridiculous position, no less than twenty or thirty kinds of currency being

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turned out. He thought it was doubtful whether there were any large holders of money in Trans-Caspia. The main point was that a large sum was involved, and the purpose for which it was required was doubtful.

Mr. Montagu thought that we had once given some sort of promise of assistance to the Askabad Government.

Mr. Keynes said that His Majesty's Government had never committed themselves in any way, but that apparently some rather vague promises had been made by Malleson.

Mr. Montagu said that, however vague the promises were, they had been made by our representative.

Lord Robert Cecil said that it was one thing to support Denekin, whose assistance might be of very great value to us in Russia, and another thing to endeavour to buttress such a rotten structure as the Askabad Government.

The Chairman understood that our policy now was to support the All-Russian Government at Omsk, which it was hoped would establish connection by means of the Orenburg Railway with Tashkent, and ultimately squeeze out of Turkestan all the Bolshevik elements there. This was one of our main reasons for staying on for the present in Trans-Caspia.

General Cox was of opinion that we should maintain Malleson's Mission in Trans-Caspia until we were quite sure that the country would not go to pieces. If there were any chance of the Government there drifting into chaos without our support he thought we ought to maintain it.

Lord Robert Cecil asked whether it would matter very much, so far as we are concerned, if Trans-Caspia did fall to pieces.

General Cox replied that it would probably react unfavourably for us on the Persian and Afghanistan borders.

The Chairman agreed, and said this was the real answer to the question why we were in Trans-Caspia. If anarchy were allowed to break out there the Ameer of Afghanistan would hold us responsible. Moreover, we did not want hordes of triumphant Bolsheviks pouring into Khorasan.

Mr. Keynes said that if it was decided to give financial aid it would be impossible for us to deal in roubles; we could, however, open, to a limited extent, a credit in krans at Meshed. He did not think we were committed to anything beyond a lump sum as a donation to clear off any obligations to which we had been committed by Malleson's promises. Lord Robert had said that he would prefer to support Denekin rather than the Askabad Government; he, himself, did not think that we had ever derived the slightest benefit from sums paid to persons in Russia.

Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that but for our support General Alexieff would have entirely gone under.

The Committee decided that—

(a.) *A lump sum, to be paid in Persian money at Meshed, should be granted as a donation to clear off any financial liabilities to which we may have been committed by General Malleson.*

(b.) *The Treasury, in concert with the India Office, should determine the amount of our obligations and draft a telegram* to the Indian Government communicating the Government's decision and explaining in what manner effect should be given to it, for the Chairman's approval before despatch.*

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* *Note.*—The telegram as despatched is printed as Appendix V to these Minutes.

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King Hussein's Title.

4. The Chairman stated that in the past there had been disputes regarding King Hussein's title, and it had been decided upwards of a year ago to recognise him as King of the Hejaz. The Foreign Office were now anxious, in view of his representation and the representation of the Arabs generally at the Peace Conference, that this title should be extended, and that he should be given the title of King of the Arabs. The India Office, as the result of advice received from political officers in Mesopotamia, and on account of other Arab chiefs in the Persian Gulf and Central Arabia, which had hitherto come within the sphere of the India Office, were opposed to the recognition of such a title. He was inclined to take the view put forward by the India Office on the ground that, although it might assist us in dealing with the problem of Syria, the grant of such a title might compromise our position in Mesopotamia, where King Hussein's claims were shadowy, to say the least of it, might be repudiated by the local population, and might prejudice our case before the Peace Conference as regards maintenance of the political régime which had been set up in Mesopotamia.

Lord Robert Cecil stated that the Foreign Office considered it very desirable that Feisal should be heard at the Peace Conference as representative of the Arabs, and that it would be extremely difficult for us to make the Arab case in view of our complications with France, and of the probability of representatives with regard to the future of the Near East being put forward by the Americans. There was the further difficulty that King Hussein repudiated the title of King of the Hejaz, did not allow it to be used, and returned letters or telegrams addressed to him as such unopened. On the other hand, he fully realised the difficulty of recognising King Hussein as King of the Arabs, on account of the attitude adopted, or likely to be adopted, by such rulers as Ibn Saud. With regard to Mesopotamia, he still thought it most desirable that we should have further enquiry and discussion regarding the form of government which we hope to see established in that country. By our joint declaration with the French Government we had repudiated any idea of annexation, while at the same time it appeared that it was not possible to set up a local Arab chieftain as nominal ruler. Sir Percy Cox had suggested putting up the Nagib of Baghdad, but from what informants who had been in Mesopotamia said, such a suggestion was impracticable.

The Chairman stated that, in regard to the future of Mesopotamia, the Committee had come to a definite decision when Sir Percy Cox was in England in the early part of the summer of 1918. It had then been decided to set up an Arab facade to the background of a British administration, and this policy was being energetically pushed forward by the establishment, in so far as was practicable, of native institutions under the control and direction of British officers. He thought that it would be quite possible to draw up a policy and to send instructions to our people in Mesopotamia, based upon the information and advice that were now being received from them. He had seen an India Office paper on the subject, and thought that nothing should be done with regard to King Hussein's title until this paper had been fully considered.

Mr. Montagu stated that the paper referred to by Lord Curzon had been drawn up roughly by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, and that he would have to revise it before submitting it to the Committee. At this point Colonel Lawrence was invited to submit his views to the Committee.

Colonel Lawrence repeated that King Hussein had always repudiated the title of King of the Hejaz, and the title by which he was known throughout Syria, the Syrian desert, the Shammar country, and the Hejaz was King of the Arab countries. This title was now in general use and those parts of western, central, and northern Arabia where the Arab Government was recognised by the people. Colonel Lawrence took the view that the recognition of this title might help us at the Peace Conference if we desired the

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assistance of Feisal in regard to our Mesopotamian policy. Feisal came to the Peace Conference as the son of his father, who is president of all the Arab revolutionary societies, including those in Mesopotamia. Colonel Lawrence took the view that just as we have a nominal Albanian ruler of Egypt, so it was desirable that we should have an Arab prince as nominal ruler in Mesopotamia. In his opinion there was no family in Mesopotamia or Syria other than the Sherifial family who could provide a prince in any way acceptable both to ourselves and to the local population. He wished to be in a position to tell Feisal when he met him at Marseilles in the course of the next few days that the suggestion had been put forward for the setting up of a nominal Sherifial head of the future Government of Mesopotamia, and that while such a proposal had not been accepted, it had not been definitely rejected.

Lord Robert Cecil said when it came to the Peace Conference we should undoubtedly have a very difficult case from the international point of view, particularly with regard to the presentation of it to the Americans; this especially so in regard to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, not only as it affected Syria, but also Mosul and Baghdad. It would be very important if we could produce an Arab who would back up our claims, and it was essential that Feisal and the British Government should have the same story.

The Chairman said that the title was part of a much larger question, and that it was essential that we should have a thoroughly thought out scheme and policy in regard to the Middle East. He thought it very desirable that Mr. Montagu should send a telegram to Baghdad reminding them of Sir Percy Cox's suggestions as to the Najib of Baghdad, calling their attention to the counter-suggestion, that a member of the Sherifial family should be set up as nominal ruler, and asking for their views on these alternatives.

Mr. Montagu explained that he had already telegraphed the gist of Colonel Lawrence's proposals to Baghdad. No reply had yet been received. He would now send a further telegram raising specifically the question of the Najib of Baghdad.

The Committee agreed to these proposals.

Mr. Montagu stated that before Colonel Lawrence withdrew he would like to raise a point in connection with the attitude adopted by the Jews in Baghdad towards the establishment of Arab rule in Mesopotamia. It was apparent from a telegram received from Baghdad that the Jews there were hostile to any such proposal. He would like to know whether a similar feeling existed among the Zionist Jews in Palestine.

Colonel Lawrence replied that he thought there would be no difficulty in reconciling Zionists and Arabs in Palestine and Syria, provided that the administration at Palestine remained in British hands.

Armenia.

5. The Chairman referred to a number of recent telegrams relating to the position of the Armenians as left by the terms of the armistice with Turkey, and more especially to a speech delivered in Parliament by Lord Robert Cecil, in which he had spoken of "our occupation of Cilicia" in their interests. This was news to the Chairman, and he would like to know whether it was being carried out.

General Thwaites replied that General Allenby stated that he could occupy Cilicia up to the railway, that is to say, Adana inclusive, but that owing to supply difficulties he could not occupy the whole of Cilicia.

The Chairman asked what our policy in regard to Armenia was to be? Did we propose to assemble all the Armenians in Cilicia, and what was to be the future fate of the so-called Armenian vilayets?

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Lord Robert Cecil replied that it was proposed to recommend the creation of an independent Armenia, including Cicilia and the whole of the six Armenian vilayets under the ægis of the French. The French Government, however, having previously agreed to the revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, were now adopting a most intransigeant attitude, and refused to accept or agree to any modifications of the agreement whatsoever, including the maintenance of their rights under the agreement in the Mosul area.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
November 21, 1918.

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APPENDIX I.

(E.C - 2384.)

The South Persia Rifles: Position of Sir P. Sykes.

Note by India Office.

1. THE question of relieving Sir P. Sykes of the command of the South Persia Rifles, which he has held since the creation of the force, was raised by the Government of India (Foreign Department) in August last, when they expressed the view that "in any case, the retention of General Sykes, whose policy we are at a loss to understand, is out of the question." The War Office, in a letter dated the 29th August, presumed "that the opportunity afforded by the readjustment of commands" (it was then proposed to separate the command of the British troops at Shiraz from that of the South Persia Rifles) "will be taken to replace Sir P. Sykes by a junior officer (say a lieutenant-colonel) as inspector."

2. In a telegram to Lord Hardinge, dated the 31st August, Sir C. Marling criticised adversely the manner in which Sir P. Sykes had conducted the operations against the Kashgai during the earlier part of the summer. At the suggestion of the Foreign Office, Sir C. Marling's criticisms were communicated through the Government of India to Sir P. Sykes, who was called upon to furnish a telegraphic report on the whole subject. His report was transmitted with the Viceroy's telegram of the 9th October, copies of which have been circulated to the Committee. The Government of India (Army Department), in transmitting the report, commented on Sir P. Sykes' explanations as follows: "In view of the circumstances of the case, the quality of the troops at his disposal, indefinite extent of the potential tribal opposition and the unreliability of the South Persia Rifles, we consider the fact that Sykes succeeded in avoiding disaster must be placed to his credit from the purely military point of view." In other words, they accept his explanations, and hold that his conduct of the operations was justified in the circumstances. In this conclusion the India Office concurs.

3. With regard to the general question of the South Persia Rifles, the position is that Sir P. Cox was authorised by the Foreign Office on the 31st October last to assure the Persian Government of our readiness to hand over the Shiraz contingent to the Governor-General of Fars (Farman Farma) "as soon as the two Governments are satisfied that the Bushire–Shiraz trade route viâ Kazerun is open to traffic, and the security and condition of the province generally, and the safety of foreign representatives and interests are assured by Farman Farma's arrangements." The offer is to be subject to the further reservation that His Majesty's Government shall have the right to be consulted before any future Governor-General of Fars is appointed. According to Sir P. Cox's original proposal (telegram No. 831, of 23rd September, 1918), the transfer of the Shiraz contingent to Farman Farma was to be made on a private understanding with the Persian Government that the Governor General "would himself ask and receive permission to retain adequate number of British personnel to administer force," but that "such officers should not be so senior (such as Sir P. Sykes or even Colonel Stokes) as to enable critics to say that real control still remained British." It is not quite clear from the correspondence whether the condition as to British personnel still holds good; but, even if it does, the proposal eliminates Sir P. Sykes. It is not known whether Sir P. Cox has actually approached the Persian Government in the matter.

4. In all the circumstances, the time appears to have come to reconsider the question of Sir P. Sykes' personal position. In the light of the Government of India's report it would be manifestly unfair to relieve him of his command in any manner that could be held to imply censure or want of confidence. On the other hand, there is little object in retaining him in a post which, if His Majesty's Government hold to their present policy, must shortly become extinct. Perhaps the best way out of the difficulty would be to summon him to London, "for purposes of consultation." His absence from Shiraz will clearly facilitate the introduction of the new régime in the South Persia Rifles, if it is to be introduced; while his advice on the whole question of the future maintenance of order in South Persia should be of the highest value to His Majesty's Government. This proposal is not put forward with any object of inviting His Majesty's Government to reverse their decision as to the transfer of the South Persia Rifles. What Sir P. Sykes would be asked to discuss would be, not the question (already answered adversely) of retaining the force in its present shape, but

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merely that of finding a substitute for them more in consonance with the present policy of His Majesty's Government. This should be made clear to Sir P. Sykes before he leaves Persia.

India Office, November 16, 1918.

APPENDIX II.

E.C.–2179.

Note by the India Office on Present Situation and Future Action in Turkestan.

THE Government of India's telegram No. 14347,* dated the 23rd October, which was circulated to the Eastern Committee on the 28th October, embodied their appreciation of the situation in Trans-Caspia, and ended with the conclusion that we should for the time being continue to support the Trans-Caspian Government, making this support contingent on the acceptance and carrying out of certain measures by that Government.

The telegram under reference was despatched prior to the cessation of hostilities with Turkey, but after the severe defeat inflicted on the Turks in Palestine, which resulted in the withdrawal of part of their forces from the Caucasus, it remains to be considered whether the fact that the Turks are now out of action renders British control of the Caspian and Trans-Caspian still necessary or desirable. It is doubtful whether the removal of the Turkish menace renders the presence of General Malleson's forces less necessary than previously. Throughout the war Germany has endeavoured to create trouble for us in Afghanistan and Persia, so that we should be forced to divert troops and war material to the Indian frontier.

The main lines by which German agents and troops could reach the Afghan frontier are—

(*a.*) Black Sea, Batum–Baku Railway, Caspian Sea, and Krasnovodsk–Merv Railway.
(*b.*) Moscow to Astrakhan, and thence to any point on the eastern shore of the Caspian.
(*c.*) Through Russia by the Moscow–Samara–Orenburg–Tashkent Railway.

Until the British fleet has obtained complete command of the Black Sea (*a*) above remains open to the Germans if British control of the Caspian is relaxed.

Control of the Caspian is also necessary to block line (*b*) to the Germans; and even with the complete British control of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea the line (*c*) remains open to the Germans and their Bolshevik friends.

According to the latest information, dated the 28th October, General Malleson has the following effective forces in Trans-Caspia :—

	Effectives.		
	Infantry.	Cavalry.	Guns.
Kaahka Front.			
1 section R.F.A.	..	..	2
British infantry	120	..	..
Indian infantry	300	..	..
Indian cavalry	..	150	..
Reinforcements *en route*	51	72	..
Total	471	222	2
Krasnovodsk.			
British infantry	500	..	..
1 section R.F.A.	..	..	2
Total	500	..	2

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The Czechs on the Ural front are reported to be retiring, and if they evacuate Orenburg, which seems likely, direct railway communication will be open between Moscow and the Afghan frontier. In that case it will be necessary to reinforce General Malleson if he is to hold his own against the Bolsheviks. On the 10th October the Government of India telegraphed: ". . . . we are considering the possibility of sending him (Malleson) now another Indian cavalry regiment, which would bring his total force on the railway and at Krasnovodsk, when troops under orders from Force 'D' all reach him, up to 6 squadrons of Indian cavalry, 1 battalion British infantry, 6 sections machine-gun company, 1 battery R.F.A., 500 rifles of 19th Punjabis, and 50 selected levies. It might be possible to send him another Indian battalion if necessary."

The surrender of the Turks has made it possible for General Marshall to spare any troops required in Trans-Caspia, and these could be despatched and maintained viâ Enzeli and Krasnovodsk, provided we control the Caspian.

Conclusion.

It is considered that the Government of India's telegram of the 23rd October still holds good, and that General Malleson's Mission should be maintained, and, if necessary, reinforced, in order to protect the N.E. Persian border from incursions by Germans, Bolsheviks, and other lawless elements. It is hoped that there will be no relaxation of our efforts to control the Caspian, and the Trans-Caspian Railway from that sea to the Afghan border, until order is finally restored in Trans-Caspia. Any reinforcements required by General Malleson should be despatched from N.W. Persia viâ Enzeli and Krasnovodsk.

November 1, 1918.

From Viceroy, Army Department, to Secretary of State for India, October 23, 1918.

(Military. Secret.) [*Received October* 25, 4·30 P.M.]

14347. 23rd October. Your telegram of 17th instant. The financial position is being dealt with separately.

Our appreciation of the situation in Trans-Caspia is as follows :—

1. Main object of Malleson's Mission was to counter possibility of Turco-German thrust towards Afghanistan. In execution of this policy, Malleson has committed himself more or less to an unstable party of Menshevics, calling themselves the Turkestan Union or Trans-Caspian Government, and has, as a result, come into direct conflict with the Bolsheviks.

2. The change in the military situation, so far as can be foreseen, very materially reduces the menace to India as a consequence of an advance by Turco-German forces from the Caucasus. There remain, however, the following considerations :—

(*a.*) The necessity for a close watch on political movements in Trans-Caspia and Turkestan, more especially in reference to their possible influence on Afghanistan and the frontier tribes.

(*b.*) The importance to us of the establishment of a Government favourable to our interests, and to which we can lend support.

(*c.*) From recent orders of War Cabinet, we presume that His Majesty's Government still desire control over Caspian; for this the retention of Krasnovodsk is necessary, and the maintenance of communication with Meshed desirable. For these purposes, Malleson's Mission is still required with a sufficient military backing to retain on our side such local elements as can best forward these objects. At the present moment the Trans-Caspian Government, although thoroughly untrustworthy, represent only body with whom we can deal.

3. His Majesty's Government have not indicated that they desire co-operation by the Trans-Caspian Government with other Allied movements against Bolsheviks generally. Gnless this is required, Malleson's support to the Trans-Caspian Government should be limited to the objects outlined in paragraph 2. In any case, difficulty of communications with Meshed and shortage of transport make it impossible for us to despatch any considerable force from India to assist.

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4. Our general conclusions are that for the time being we should continue to support the Trans-Caspian Government. We should, however, make it clear to them that our support, which is necessary to them to maintain their position, is contingent:—

Firstly, on their undertaking to reorganise and control their forces to the satisfaction of our representative. Their chiefs must be disabused of the views they now appear to hold that we can be relied on to do all the fighting for them, as was evident from the conduct of their troops reported in the series of telegrams to which your attention was drawn in my No. 14196, dated the 28th October.

Secondly, on their acceptance of the military measures which our military representatives may consider necessary.

Thirdly, on the cessation of barbarous methods by which they have treated their military and political prisoners.

Fourthly, equitable and proper treatment of Turcomans. Monetary assistance could not altogether be withheld from this Government, but their officials must be made to understand that we are not prepared to spend money, except on projects which would have [? been] approved and passed by our representative [? and then on results]. We should also give them military support to the extent possible in their arrangements to prevent a Bolshevik advance west of Kaakha to keep the Turcomans in order, and to maintain communications between Meshed and Krasnovodsk. We would make it clear that on no account are our troops to engage in enterprises east of Kaakha, without express orders which would depend on His Majesty's Government's instructions in paragraph 3.

Further, in view of importance of support from local Persian authorities in Khorasan, we should take all possible steps to keep the Governor-General on our side.

APPENDIX III.

E.C.–2373.

From Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Army Department, November 15, 1918.

(Military. Secret.)

Clear the line.

3035. Your telegram No. 14977, dated 6th; 15090, dated 9th; and 15251, dated 13th November.

It is not policy of His Majesty's Government to embark on anti-Bolshevik campaign in Russia, but considerations both of honour and of interest demand that he should keep Bolshevism from regions east of Black Sea. Our object is to help Russians to stand by themselves, and we should therefore do everything possible to support and strengthen existing organisations which offer hope of maintaining law and order and are working in our interests. Our support would consist ordinarily of warlike material and financial aid, and our troops must not be committed to fresh enterprises which might place them in difficult situations. The above applies to the Askabad Government. It is evidently impossible for Malleson's troops to protect that Government by remaining in Askabad. Therefore he may be authorised to occupy Merv as long as, in his opinion, the military situation necessitates it, but British or Indian troops should not be employed east or south of Merv. This does not apply to Russians and local hires. Malleson should be instructed to use every means in his power to prevent hostilities between Askabad Government and Turcomans. In the light of the above, it may be necessary to reconsider your orders not to reinforce Malleson, the reasons for which I await.

It does not appear desirable, in view of his record, that Bicharakoff should cross into Trans-Caspia, but, if this becomes unavoidable, conditions under which he does so must be settled by you.

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APPENDIX IV.

E.C.–2426.

Copy, Telegram from Viceroy, Army Department, dated November 20, 1918.
[*Received* 9 P.M.]

Clear the Line.

15664. 20th November. Summary of Malleson's M.D.00995, 17th November, from Askabad, giving result of discussion with Ziemen and Financial Minister, is as follows :—

(*a.*) Trans-Caspian Government's monthly expenditure is 16,000,000 roubles, and they have no means of raising revenue till stable government is installed owing to trade stoppage and inability to impose taxes on population, three-fourths of which is Turcoman.

(*b.*) All methods of affording financial assistance were discussed and difficulties explained to Askabad Government, who said there was undoubtedly good deal of money in country, but it was hoarded in small quantities.

(*c.*) Two following methods only ones likely to produce money :—

(1.) Selling bank drafts on India for rupee or on London for sterling, to tempt larger holders of rapidly depreciating roubles to make them available.

(2.) Malleson to be authorised by His Majesty's Government to collect rouble notes against promise to pay in silver rupees three months later, rate of repayment being Meshed Bank daily kran rate for rouble notes, and 2 krans being taken as equivalent to 1 rupee. Our guarantee essential, as their credit is nil. No interest to be paid, as falling value of rouble would result in ultimate profit to investors.

(*d.*) Askabad Government's immediate requirements before end of November to prevent collapse of Government are 30,000,000 roubles, equivalent at present rate to rather more than 250,000*l.* They urge immediate authority to collect rouble notes, as in (*c*) (2), pointing out lack of financial assistance given them to date and that expenditure has been for our mutual benefit, without which [? resulting] anarchy would have had far-reaching and serious results.

(*e.*) Malleson made them no promises nor held out hopes not covered by previous sanction, but he considers payment of this money cannot be further postponed without risking everything gained, and he suggests immediate approval to raise money as proposed.

(*f.*) Askabad Government have further commitments of 88,000,000 roubles expended on providing for refugees, arming and equipping troops, repairing railway, and buying food for sale at low rates. They ask for permission for Malleson to raise this amount also for them before end of December, and thereafter for a monthly subsidy from us of 16,000,000 roubles, until they are firmly established in Turkestan, when, they represent, they would be able to pay their way by release of cotton and wool and by assistance of orderly elements rallying to their side.

(*g.*) In reply to Malleson's objecting to these large amounts, they assured him of economy exercised, but submitted it was cheap investment for us, as, alternatively, their ruin would involve us in larger expenditure to stem the consequent anarchy which would be created by Bolsheviks and Mahommedans.

2. We must point out that, if His Majesty's Government decide to give the financial assistance asked for, the supply from India of the specie required is, in view of currency situation, out of the question, nor can we undertake to meet rupee drafts on India. Please see in this connection our telegram 13393, 2nd October, and your telegram of 17th October. In another telegram Malleson asks for authorisation within the next three days to collect rouble notes on the lines indicated in paragraph 3 of the above telegram.

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APPENDIX V.

Telegram from the Secretary of State to Viceroy, Army Department, dated 26th November, 1918.

HIS Majesty's Government appreciate Malleson's difficulties, but with reference to his telegram No. 26317, I would remind you that on the 2nd October you reported, after enquiry from him, that the financial matter was not urgent. On the 17th October he was instructed that His Majesty's Government desired to avoid financial commitments, and that his negotiations with Askabad Government should be limited to questions of currency, and it was not till the 11th November that he represented that financial assistance was very urgent.

Further, His Majesty's Government had been led to suppose that the 72,000,000 roubles captured by the Askabad Government would carry them on for some time.

While His Majesty's Government desire, in the interests of India, to keep the Askabad Government in existence as being the only organisation tending towards law and order in those parts, and appearing to work in our interest, and likely to prevent Bolshevism from penetrating Khorassan or troubling Afghanistan, they cannot meet large recurrent payments specified in your telegram No. 15664 of the 20th November. Malleson's own liabilities for stores, &c., must, of course, be met either by drafts or silver, but the most His Majesty's Government can undertake would be payment of a lump sum to Askabad Government in Persian currency in full discharge both of actual liabilities incurred by Malleson, and of any definite promises he may have made of financial support. For purposes beyond this no silver is available except at the expense of other financial obligations in Persia, of which you are aware. It is for you to advise His Majesty's Government as to amount required for this purpose, and whether you consider objects aimed at and results likely to be secured are of sufficient importance to justify such financial dislocation and disturbance of our policy in Persia.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. December 1918.

SECRET.

E.C. 39th Meeting.

WAR CABINET. 4

EASTERN COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting held at 1, Carlton House Terrace, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, November 27, 1918, at 3·30 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.
The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.
The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The following also attended:—

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.
Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.
SIR ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.
Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.
Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.
Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.
SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.
Mr. R. MOWAT.
Captain E. ABRAHAM, *Assistant Secretary, War Cabinet.*

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary.*

Middle Eastern Questions, with a View to the Peace Conference.

1. THE Chairman said that the Committee was now charged with the very difficult task of preparing for the Peace Conference the case in regard to the Turkish territories which had passed into our occupation or under our sway. Sir Erle Richards, who was present at the Meeting, had been entrusted by General Smuts, on behalf of the Government, with the task of drawing up our case in a proper form for presentation to the Conference, and the Committee had thought it desirable that he should come and hear a full discussion of all the points to be raised. The Chairman said that he was anxious to avoid, that afternoon, a confused discussion in which the interests and future of Mesopotamia would be mixed up with those of Syria, Damascus, Armenia, and Palestine. These were all parts of the same great problem, but he proposed that the Committee should consider them in turn at subsequent meetings. The Chairman, proceeding, said that the case which they had to present to the Peace Conference fell into geographical divisions. First, the countries extending from Basra just above the Persian Gulf through Baghdad and Mosul to the confines of Kurdistan on the north; second, further to the north, the question of the Kurds, which is closely connected with the Mosul vilayet; further north again, the difficult Armenian question; then to the west, the question of the Arab State which was already in partial existence at Damascus, under Faisal; the difficult subject of his relations with the French; the degree to which we are, or ought to be, bound by the Sykes-Picot Agreement; the area of French influence to be reserved for them, in one form or another, in the Lebanon and neighbouring districts, and finally the question of the future of Palestine. The Chairman said he proposed that afternoon to discuss the problems of he long Eastern strip from Mosul in the North to the Persian

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Gulf in the South. He then reviewed the history of events in that region.

The Chairman's opening statement was followed by a general discussion.

The discussion was adjourned.

(The text of the statement and of the discussion is printed as an annex to these Minutes.)

The Committee decided :—

1. *To adjourn the discussion.*

2. *That the Secretary of State for India should re-construct, for the Chairman's approval before despatch, his draft telegram to the Political Officer, Baghdad, in the general sense of the above discussion, having particular regard to the following points :—*

(*a.*) The following specific questions to be put to Captain Wilson :—

(i.) Do the peoples of Mesopotamia desire a single Arab State from Mosul down to the Gulf ?

(ii.) Accepting British tutelage as a necessity of the case, do the said peoples want an Arab ruler to be set up as a titular head of a single Arab State in this area ?

(iii.) If the said peoples desire an Arab ruler, who is the most suitable man ?

(*b.*) Captain Wilson to ascertain the views of the peoples of Mesopotamia in respect of the above questions.

(*c.*) Captain Wilson to consult with Miss Gertrude Bell and any other specially qualified officer in regard to the personality of a single ruler if such be set up, and to submit their joint views.

3. *That the Foreign Office shall also, at a suitable stage, consult Sir P. Cox.*

4. *That at their subsequent Meetings, the Committee should consider the following questions :—*

(*a.*) *The Settlement of the Caucasian Regions with Special Regard to Armenia.*—The Foreign Office to circulate to the Committee, papers giving facts as to what had been done and as to our commitments.

(*b.*) *Syria and Palestine.*—The Foreign Office to prepare and circulate to the Committee similar papers regarding these regions.

(*c.*) *Persia.*—The Foreign Office and India Office to circulate papers summarising the position and our desiderata from the points of view of their respective departments.

5. *That the Committee should meet again on the afternoon of Monday, the 2nd December, 1918, to discuss the question of the Caucasian regions and Armenia with a view to the Peace Conference.*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.* 1,
November 27, 1918.

ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting held at 1, *Carlton House Terrace, S.W.* 1, *on Wednesday, November* 27, 1918, *at* 3·30 P.M.

LORD CURZON: This Committee is now charged with the very difficult task of preparing for the Peace Conference the case, on which we have been engaged for so long, in regard to the Turkish territories that have passed into our occupation or under our sway, and we have to draw together and weave into a single whole all the scattered threads which have unravelled themselves before our eyes during the past two years. Sir Erle Richards, who is with us to-day, has been entrusted by General Smuts, on behalf of the Government, with the task of drawing up our case in a proper form for presentation to the Conference, and before he undertakes

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this task we think it desirable that he should come here and hear a full discussion of the points as they present themselves to this Committee. The one thing I want to avoid is a confused discussion to-day in which we shall mix up the interests and future of Mesopotamia, on the one hand, with those of Syria, Damascus, Armenia, or Palestine on the other. All of these, it is true, are parts of the same great problem, but if we have a discussion in which we wander from one to the other we shall probably never come to any result at all.

The case which we have to present to the Peace Conference really falls into different geographical divisions. First, there is the fate that we propose for the whole of the countries on the Eastern side of the zone which we are examining, by which I mean the countries extending from Basra, just above the Persian Gulf, through Baghdad and Mosul, to the confines of Kurdistan on the north—incidentally, of course, bringing in the very important subject of the relation in which this part of the conquered territory is to stand to King Hussein. Then, further to the north, is brought into our field of vision, in connection with the Mosul vilayet, the question of the Kurds. A little further north of that is the difficult Armenian question, upon which, I suppose, we shall be expected to advise the Government at the Peace Conference. Then, if you follow me further to the west, there arises the entire question of the Arab State, which is already in partial existence at Damascus, under Faisal; the difficult subject of his relations with the French; the degree to which we are, or ought to be, bound by the Sykes-Picot Agreement; the area of French influence to be reserved for them, in one form or another, in the Lebanon and in the neighbouring districts. Thus we are brought to the final question of the future of Palestine. My inclination will be, if the Committee agree with me, to commence on the east, and to discuss to-day the problems of that long Eastern strip extending from Mosul in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south, and to pass on—not necessarily to-day, but at other meetings, if required—to the other questions. May I say this: do not let any of us think for a moment that we can dispose of these questions in one hour, or two hours, or three hours, for they are about the most responsible matters that any body of Ministers or officials can be charged with in connection with the war. Upon the fate of these territories, and the way in which our case is presented to the Peace Conference, and the form of administration to be set up, will depend not only the future of the territories themselves, but also the future of the British Empire in the East. Therefore, no time that we devote to the matter here is wasted, and if it takes us two or three days to arrive at something like a solution, I, for one, shall not complain, and I know that none of the Committee will do so either.

At first sight, anybody looking back upon the panorama of the last two or three years—and I have been in it from the start, as chairman of one or other of these Committees—cannot help being a little confused at the various conflicting voices uttered. Different policies are seen, and there is the question of the degree to which, at one time or another, we have committed ourselves to those different policies. I have therefore set myself, during the last few days, to an examination of the whole of the Papers. It sometimes happens, when one goes through a case *seriatim*, omitting no stage, that the panorama unrolls before our eyes with unexpected clearness, and I shall show you that all we have done in the past has tended towards a goal by no means so obscure as one might think at first sight. In order to enable Sir Erle Richards to grasp the case sufficiently, I will take you through the leading phases of what has passed in this connection during the last two or three years. I will be as brief as possible, because most of it is in your minds, although you will perhaps not be averse from having it recalled to you.

The first stage was the advance of the Indian forces to the head of the Persian Gulf, the capture of Basra, the visit of the Viceroy of India, in February 1915, to Basra, and the assurances he gave on behalf of the British Government. I need not repeat them, but they amounted to little more than this, that in no circumstances would those territories then occupied by us be given back to the Turks. There was no asseverance that we intended to remain; there was nothing said about Arab administration, but a definite promise was given that those territories should not go back to the Turks. That was stage No. 1.

The second stage was the discussions that took place between Sir Henry MacMahon, then High Commissioner in Egypt, and King Hussein, in October 1915. As the Committee will remember, Sir Henry MacMahon, who knew nothing of the pourparlers already going on, which culminated later in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, while negotiating with Hussein, who also knew nothing of what was in contemplation, gave certain undertakings by which we have been a good deal embarrassed ever since. What Sir Henry MacMahon said to Hussein was as follows: The British Government was prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs

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within the territories specified by Hussein in a previous communication. That was practically all the Arab-inhabited territories from Mersina and Adana down to the Persian Gulf. But, he added that " for the vilayets of Baghdad and Basra a special measure of administrative control would be required to secure the country from aggression, to promote the welfare of the local populations, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests." The Sherif replied on the 5th November, 1915, agreeing to British administration of the Irak regions then occupied by British troops, for a short time, subject to compensation. This claim was never admitted by us; but, on the other hand, was never withdrawn by him, and it is one which we must be prepared at any time to see renewed.

Then I come to the third stage, that of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916. I need not now go through the whole of the terms of that unfortunate Agreement, which has been hanging like a millstone round our necks ever since. The points that concern us to-day are these. That Agreement gave to France priority of enterprise and local loans, as well as the appointment of advisers and public functionaries in the area denominated " A " (corresponding to the British rights in area " B "), both of these areas to be included in a future Arab State. Observe that the French area " A " includes Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Palmyra, the whole of the Upper Euphrates Valley down nearly to Ana, as well as the more northerly districts of Ras-el-Ain, Nisibin, and Mosul, down to Altun Keupri, just north of Kirkuk. Bear in mind that, under that Agreement, in area " A " the French have these rights, and we have no corresponding rights there at all. I need not now discuss the further and extensive rights of administration and control given to France by that Agreement in the Blue Zone, in Syria, nor what was said there about Palestine. We will come to those topics later. Thus, in May 1916, we were bound hard and fast by this deplorable Agreement, to which, as we know, the French seem disposed to adhere most tenaciously.

The next stage, after the military operations in Mesopotamia—to which I need not refer, but which proved so successful—was this. After full discussion in this Committee, or the Committee which preceded it, and after acceptance by the Cabinet, General Maude's Proclamation was issued to the people of Baghdad on the 19th March, 1917. In it we said: " It is not the wish of the British Government to impose upon you "—that is, the people of Baghdad—" alien institutions. . . . . We hope that you will flourish again under institutions in consonance with your sacred laws and racial ideals. . . . . We hope that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown among the peoples of the earth. . . . . We hope that you may be united with your kinsmen in the north, east, south, and west, in realising the aspirations of your race." It is true that these general terms did seem to indicate, and were intended to indicate, some sort of Confederation of Arab States in that part of Arabia. This proclamation of General Maude was followed within ten days by a telegram to the Government of India, in which we laid down the policy of His Majesty's Government on similar lines. This was the first stage at which the Government here did definitely and precisely lay down their policy. At that time we contemplated a difference of administrative arrangements between the vilayets of Basra and Baghdad. We proposed that the Basra vilayet should remain permanently under British administration. We proposed that Baghdad should be made an Arab State with local rulers or governors, but under a British protectorate in everything but the name. The State should exhibit an Arab façade, and be administered as an Arab province by an independent agency, in accordance with existing laws and institutions. Thus we were still at that time in favour of something approximating to the annexation of Basra, and involving very clearly a British protectorate over Baghdad.

Then came the visit of Sir Percy Cox to this country, and the discussion of his memorandum* of the 22nd April, 1918. You will observe that a year had elapsed since the statement of policy made by us in March 1917. Sir Percy Cox, still pursuing the policy then laid down, put his proposals before us. He proposed government by a High Commissioner, and in the discussion at the meetings of this Committee he suggested that the High Commissioner might be assisted, if required, by a Cabinet, half of natives and half of British officials, behind which might be an administrative council, or some advisory body consisting entirely of prominent natives. We discussed with him the question of a titular head of this Baghdad State. He expressed the strongest opinion against acknowledging in any form the authority of the Sherif of Mecca, King Hussein. He said, " Let the Sherif remain the guardian of the Holy Places, and, if necessary to soothe his pride, pay him a subsidy from the revenues

* E.C. 173.

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of Irak." He went further, and said that, if a figurehead had to be set up, he would recommend an old gentleman named the Nakib of Baghdad, about whom I will say more presently. He concluded by advising against the Sherif or his family in any form. He was even averse from our consulting him on the subject. Finally, although he accepted and agreed with the Government policy of British annexation of Basra, or something like it, and of a British protectorate in Baghdad, at the same time he expressed the opinion, to which attention has been called by the India Office, that a uniform administration of the two vilayets was both possible and desirable.

A month after Sir Percy Cox had been here, given his views to us, had those views accepted by the Government, and been sent back from this country with instructions to carry them out, we had a memorandum from Miss Gertrude Bell, to which I allude because she expressed in it the strongest opinions against the selection, if we required a native figurehead, of the Nakib of Baghdad for the post. She pointed out that he was an old man, and a man of no personality, that he had no suitable heirs, his eldest son was half-witted, he himself was a Sunni, whereas the bulk of the people in that part of the country are Shiahs, and she concluded by saying that, on the whole, she would recommend the nominal overlordship of the Sherif, not, indeed, with any son residing or exercising functions in Baghdad, but the father wielding a sort of spiritual superiority, and having religious matters referred to him. She thought this might not be unacceptable, because, although the Sherif of Mecca is a Sunni, he is a Sunni of very liberal views, and as such would be acceptable even to the Shiah population of Baghdad and to the tribal chiefs, several of whom had already acknowledged his authority.

The next stage was a telegram from Captain Wilson, acting for Sir Percy Cox in Baghdad, dated the 15th September, 1918 (we are now approaching the present date), in which he pointed out what I think we have all realised for long, that it is impossible to have two administrations in the two vilayets. Indeed, he had already decided to amalgamate the two under a single officer, Colonel Howell, at Baghdad. A few days later, on the 27th September, 1918, Captain Wilson put forward a proposal for a Commission to go out from this country in the forthcoming winter, to discuss on the spot and advise His Majesty's Government upon such questions as the future garrison of Mesopotamia, the construction of railways, medical organisation, civil organisation, currency, banking, finance, commercial policy, navigation, irrigation, agriculture, and so on. The Government of India strongly objected. The India Office, in a memorandum* dated the 21st October, 1918, agreed entirely that the idea of two separate administrations was impossible, and advocated the despatch of a very important commission which was to deal with all these grave matters. The case came before this Committee. Some of us—General Smuts and myself—thought the moment was inopportune for sending such a Commission. We thought that our case, instead of being helped, might be hampered at the Peace Conference if we were suspected by our friends or rivals there of having stolen a march on them by creating a system of government in advance. We strongly recommended that, for the time being, the idea of a Commission should not be proceeded with.

The next paper that comes under our notice is a very important paper† by General Macdonogh, giving his views about the future of these countries, and, in addition, of Syria and Palestine. I need not go through the whole of his proposals. I will only allude to those which bear on the subject we are discussing this afternoon. He proposed that, apart from what should be done with Palestine, with Haifa, Lebanon, and so on, the Arabs under Faisal should have all the remainder of the Arab-speaking parts of Syria, including the coast line from Tripoli to Arsus, with a British Minister at Damascus. The Armenians might be given the Cilician Plain with the coast line from Ayas to Mersina. General Macdonogh further proposed a separate Arab State, under British influence, to be constituted in the districts of Jezireh. As regards Irak, from north of Mosul to the Gulf, we should aim at a separate State there, with a capital at Baghdad, under Abdullah, one of the sons of the Sherif, with a direct British administration under the British Resident at Baghdad. He suggested that we should leave Hussein with the title of ruler of the Hejaz, and allow him to be prayed for in the mosques.

At this stage, on the 4th November, 1918, Colonel Lawrence came before us. He is a man with a remarkable career, and of great ability, and he represented to us what we may call the extreme Arab point of view, the kind of thing that Faisal would have said if he had been at our table that afternoon. We asked him to draw up a paper‡ containing the views he submitted to the Committee. We also sent a telegram to Captain Wilson, giving him a sketch of the proposals put forward by

* E.C. 2030. † E.C. 2133. ‡ E.C. 2207.

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Colonel Lawrence, and asking him to comment upon them. What Colonel Lawrence said at the meeting here and what was telegraphed to Baghdad is not precisely identical with what he said in his paper. At our table he put forward proposals for the creation of three Kingdoms or States: the Syrian Arab State, under Faisal, in the north; another Arab State under Zeid, with capital at Mosul, in Upper Mesopotamia; and Lower Mesopotamia, under the third son, Abdullah, in the south, Hussein to be disposed of by having the title of Amir-ul-Mominin and being mentioned in the prayer in the mosques. That was the proposal he placed before us here. In his paper you will see that he does not go so far as to propose these exact subdivisions, but he does say—and this is of very great importance—that Faisal—I will not say in return for these concessions, if made to him—is in favour of the British in Palestine, and is also in favour of the British in Irak, and of a purely nominal Arab administration there. In so far, therefore, as Colonel Lawrence speaks for Faisal, if we can meet Faisal's views elsewhere in the West, we know that Faisal is behind us, I do not say in the extreme views that have been advanced, but in the British aspect of the case that we desire to put forward with regard to these countries.

Next in order is this. Captain Wilson sends a telegram a day or two later, telling us a rather interesting fact, namely, that he and his officers are already engaged in setting up local and municipal councils in Mesopotamia. It will be an important point, even if small, that when the Peace Conference comes we shall be able to point to indigenous institutions already existing, not only in municipal areas, but even in the country around, where the peasants and landowners are being organised into something like administrative units.

At this stage we have a paper,* dated the 15th November, 1918, from another authority, Commander Hogarth, some of which must really be quoted, because he speaks with an authority as great as that of any man living. His views, broadly speaking, are these. He speaks of the claims of the Arabs to the Syrian coast and to a seaport at Tripoli, and he says that Syria should be treated as an entity apart from either Mesopotamia and Irak or Hejaz, and that the Arab leaders should receive, as soon as possible, explicit assurances on the above points. He says there must be a non-Turkish Cilicia, into which the Armenians should be invited to migrate. He also advocates a separate State in Northern Mesopotamia, with Mosul or Urfa as the capital, and says its northern boundaries must depend upon the attitude of the Kurds.

A few days earlier the Anglo-French Declaration† of the 8th November, 1918, had been concluded by the Foreign Office with the French Government; it was the subject of many previous discussions here, and it put in general language, which should not be unduly compromising to either, the common aim which we believe France to have with ourselves in those parts of the world. No sooner, however, had that Declaration been issued and telegraphed to the East than it appears to have excited a good deal of alarm there. For the first time it brought on to the *tapis* the idea of self-determination. It encouraged all those unfriendly to us to think that an Asiatic rather than a British form of government might be set up, and every community began to look at it to see how it was going to affect itself.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is true of Mesopotamia, too.

LORD CURZON: I think you are quite right.

A rather remarkable sequence of telegrams—and I am now drawing to an end—shows how this Declaration was received by Captain Wilson, our Political Officer at Baghdad. The first is dated the 17th November. Captain Wilson is very much alarmed at the Declaration. He says the Arabs in Mesopotamia will not have anything to do with Syria or the Hejaz, and do not expect any sweeping measure of independence, and once again he advocates the firm and unquestioned declaration of a British Protectorate. That telegram is followed in a day or two by one from General Marshall, also speaking with the authority of three or four years' experience in that part of the world. He does not agree with Captain Wilson's pessimistic views of the effects of the Declaration, which he thinks may be accepted, but he would like an addition to it, in this sense, namely, that the establishment of national government and administration should be stated as the ultimate aim rather than as the first objective of the British Government there. Captain Wilson at the same time reports that the Sheikhs of Diwaniyah, Ruaithah, and Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates, have been to see him, and are apprehensive of any idea of Arab rule untempered by British interference.

* E.C. 2302. † E.C. 2136A.

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Next, on the 20th November, comes Captain Wilson's reply to Colonel Lawrence's views as telegraphed from here. Captain Wilson adheres to his former opinion and emphasises the absence of any connection between the rest of Arabia and Mesopotamia. He is dead against setting up any foreign puppet ruler, and he would exclude Irak altogether from any settlement with the Sherifian family.

At our last meeting the India Office put in a note,* which had not then been read, by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, which brought this history up to date, and on behalf of the India Office made the following recommendations. The India Office thought that a British Protectorate was now probably impossible, and that, in these circumstances, we ought to fight for the second of the two original alternatives of Sir Percy Cox, as accepted by us in the early part of the year, namely, British administration behind a façade of native institutions. Sir A. Hirtzel did not recommend the introduction of the sons of King Hussein, and again quoted what Sir Percy Cox had said about the Nakib. He was strongly averse from quarrelling with the French over Syria, and thought that Captain Wilson should be authorised at once to start a propaganda in favour of British administration over the united vilayets of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul.

Then finally there are two telegrams, one of them only of importance in relation to something I said before with regard to the Commission that was proposed here, and which we decided for the moment not to proceed with. Captain Wilson is strongly against any Commission going out at the present time, because he says until the future status and form of government of the country have been decided by reference to public opinion, a Commission would merely consume time and do what was not required.

Finally, we come to the telegram† dated the 24th November, which is the last received from Captain Wilson. After himself thinking over the Anglo-French Declaration, and after saying that the people at Baghdad have also been considering it and that he has been doing his best to ascertain public opinion, he represents educated opinion as running on the following lines. With your permission, I will read these statements, because it seems to me that they present, on the whole, the most correct summary of the point at which we have now arrived:—

(1.) "All reject idea of restoration of Turkish rule." That is accepted *nem. con.*

(2.) "All reject idea of Arab kingdom without British advice, assistance, or control." I think that we are all agreed upon that.

(3.) "None wishes for formal annexation by British Government." That registers a final abandonment of the idea of annexation. We are all agreed upon that? ("Yes.") Then (1), (2), and (3) are accepted.

(4.) "All agree that an Arab State under an Arab Amir, including Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, is an ideal solution."

Upon that also I think we are all agreed, although there may be a doubt as to who the Amir should be.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Subject to this, I think. I hold the opinion that you might have a variation of that and have two lieutenants, one in Mosul and one in Baghdad, under the nominal supreme headship of the Sherif.

LORD CURZON: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is a modification of it.

LORD CURZON: Yes. We will discuss that in a moment.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is the only criticism I have to make.

LORD CURZON: Then No. 5.

"All are unanimous in asking for a British High Commissioner and British adviser in all Ministries of the Arab State and throughout the country.

(6.) "All are unanimous in wishing Sir P. Cox to be first incumbent of the post. This feeling is general, to my personal knowledge, all over Irak, particularly in the country districts, where Sir P. Cox's name carried greatest weight, and in Najaf and Kerbela."

I suppose we are all agreed upon this, that whether you set up an Amir or not, and whoever be the Amir, there must be a British High Commissioner?

* E.C. 2454. † E.C. 2486.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, something of that kind, a supreme British adviser of some kind.

LORD CURZON: With his headquarters at Baghdad?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Whether a High Commissioner or whatever he be called—that is a matter of detail—but there must be such a man.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Again, although it does not concern us to-day, we should all of us like to see Sir Percy Cox occupy that position if he is free to take it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should think so. Upon that I should like to reserve my opinion.

LORD CURZON: I am merely taking the telegram point by point, and we need not discuss the details to-day. Now No. 7:—

> "All agree that, before any decision can rightly be come to, the opinions of the country must be taken, and on clear understanding, on which the inhabitants of the country themselves rely, that a protectorate will in due course be declared, and that for the present military administration will continue. I am prepared to arrange for this in a manner consonant with educated opinion and not inconsistent with maintenance of public order. I do not doubt that our confidence will be justified by results."

I think we had better postpone that. It raises the whole question of a protectorate.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should not like to publish that.

MR. MONTAGU: He uses that as a term of art, and in its loosest form.

LORD CURZON: (8.) All differ as to Amir to be chosen. The following names have been mentioned in this connection: "(i) Hadi Pasha al Umari"—he is an old Turkish official, who has the solitary merit of being anti-German, although he was educated in Germany. "(ii) A member of the family of the Sultan of Egypt"—which I hope we shall not consider for a moment. "(iii) A son of the Sherif of Mecca"—that is remarkable; and, lastly, he trots out, only to knock over, the Nakib of Baghdad. Thus he disappears from the scene. Later on, Captain Wilson says, as regards the third alternative, namely, the son of the Sherif of Mecca: "I am now advised that the third proposal would meet with widespread acceptance in Baghdad, and that it would probably be well received outside, because all know who the Sherif is. It is also considered that he would be acceptable to Shiahs on account of Sherif's well-known latitude in religious views. For reasons connected with Persian Gulf—Central Arabia politics and on other grounds, I am, however, strongly opposed to it"—in other words, he retains his personal objections.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That observation may have some meaning.

MR. MONTAGU: However broad-minded the Sherif is, is it not proved that Abdullah himself is——

LORD CURZON: I do not recollect that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think that is admitted.

MR. MONTAGU: Abdullah is a gentleman who is very fond of his own comfort, and so long as he is left with his women he does nothing at all. I think Ali is the one I am thinking of.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

MR. MONTAGU: He succeeded the Sherif himself.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Abdullah is supposed to be rather a worldly person, without any particular views.

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LORD CURZON: We are now approaching the end of this discussion, which has, I fear, become tedious to you, but it has brought us to this. There are only two questions of immediate importance which we have still to settle. Are we to encourage Captain Wilson to proceed with this idea of getting the people to say, "This is what we want," and, secondly, what are we to do about a figure-head?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree. I do not think there is really a very great deal of doubt about the broad lines of policy, for they have practically settled themselves. We ought to have a British-controlled Government, and I do not think there is any question at all that it ought to be in form an Arab Government. I go a little further than that, and aim ultimately at, if possible, setting up an Arab Government, if we can create one, in a generation or so. The doubt is as to the man. So far as that is concerned, personally I do not see anybody better than Abdullah. He seems to me to be the best we can have. The Nakib is out of it. The new candidate Captain Wilson has dug up, Hadi Pasha, is a fantastic proposal. It is only because Captain Wilson dislikes the idea of having Abdullah that he looks about for somebody else. Abdullah, from all I have heard of him, would do tolerably well if we have the right man to control him. He is a cleverish fellow, I understand, and is thought to be the cleverest of the Sherif's sons. He is a sensualist, idle, and very lazy.

LORD CURZON: Where has Abdullah been all this while?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: His father relies on him as his diplomatic son. I should say, on the whole, he is the best we can do. The other thing is as to what Captain Wilson should do, for I think it necessary to put in a word of caution.

LORD CURZON: Will you give us your views upon this? There is a final suggestion in Captain Wilson's telegram, that he would like to get Sir Percy Cox at Baghdad, where his authority and influence are supreme. He asks, would it be possible to send Sir Percy Cox there, and appoint him High Commissioner for the time being, in order to give the country time to get upon its legs, leaving the future form of Arab rule to be settled after the passage of a certain amount of time, subject to a promise that it will be instituted. This would amount to a guarantee of good government to everybody concerned.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think I am against that on many grounds. I think we have got a very difficult diplomatic position here. You have alluded to the existence of the French Agreement. You have got to get rid of that somehow. We can only get rid of it in one of two ways, or by a mixture of the two—by buying off the French with some other concession, and by getting the Americans to assist us with their pressure that our solution is the right one. Thirdly, we must have the Arabs behind us, but I do not think it would be worth while to encourage Wilson to get up counter-petitions and things that will not impress any intelligent people at the Peace Conference, because they know the country is easily got at. Of course, a good deal depends upon the kind of backing we get from people like Faisal. Faisal will be there, and he will be listened to. He has distinguished himself in the war. Therefore, from that point of view, it seems to me to be important to have the Arabs behind us and to have Faisal behind us. I feel sure, from all the telegrams that have come from Sir R. Wingate about Hussein, that he is very suspicious of anything which leads him to think that we are not in earnest in setting up in some form or another an Arab Government. That would react very badly, and if coincidently there was an allegation of Hussein that he did not trust our pro-Arab feelings, that would have a very disastrous result at the Peace Conference. I do not think we can afford to have a quarrel with Hussein. That is the broad view I want to put forward. The Americans will only support us if they think we are going in for something in the nature of a native Government, and there are signs—I do not want to say more about it here—that the Americans are not so friendly disposed to us as they were, certainly as we hoped they would be in all these matters. Therefore, we have to be careful, for the position is a difficult one. In a way the French are in an unassailable position. If we cannot induce them in any way to abandon the Agreement, we cannot go back on our signatures. We are in that positon; we have signed it, and they have got us so far as that is concerned. I am anxious to do nothing which will look as if we were not playing fair about it, and I am also anxious to get the Arab feeling behind us, openly, as far as we can. That is all I have to say.

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LORD CURZON: About the Sykes-Picot Agreement you express the view which you have always taken, that by our signature we are bound. Is that so in the circumstances of this case? You will remember that the Sykes-Picot Agreement was concluded under conditions wholly different from those existing now. I think General Macdonogh has elaborated that in his Paper. That can be established. We ourselves, in our discussions with the French, have told them that we regard the Agreement as utterly out of date.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Perhaps it is not so bad as that, and I may have put it in an exaggerated form. The position, so far as negotiations are concerned, is this. We have written to them saying that, in agreeing to the arrangement in the first part of the agreement, by which we allowed French Governors to serve under Allenby in Syria, although we did this we thought it was necessary to re-discuss the whole thing with the Americans.

GENERAL SMUTS: All the whole questions?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, outside, and they accepted that in their first letter, and we took a note of their acceptance. Later they said this—which was thoroughly impudent—that they did not mean to give up their rights under the old Agreement. That does make it somewhat better, but that is our best position. At the same time I do feel this, that the French have a right to say, "It is true the circumstances are different, but when you are making an Agreement, in the middle of a war, about the ultimate settlement, for certain reasons, it is because you know the circumstances may be different that you wish to get the Agreement settled at that moment and you cannot afterwards come back and say you would not have signed the Agreement if you had known what the circumstances were going to be later on." I do not say it is hopeless, for I think we shall get what we want about it. All I say is, that we must not lose sight of the difficult diplomatic position we are in if, for some reason or another, we are not on very friendly terms with the Americans. May I make one other observation, in the nature of an apology. I am not personally responsible, it is the Secretary of State, and he is not here. He has a very elaborate Paper* which has been prepared by the Foreign Office, a new Paper dealing with the whole subject setting out with maps all the existing state of things, all the Agreements which deal with it. It is an extremely good Paper, prepared by Sir Eyre Crowe and Mr. Toynbee. I have been through it myself, and I really think it will be of the greatest assistance to the Committee. It is before the Secretary of State. It is rather long, and apparently he has had it several days, but has not been able to read it. I do not think it has yet been distributed. When the Secretary of State has had an opportunity of reading it I will have it circulated.

LORD CURZON: Does the Secretary of State agree to the proposals?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think so. It has an elaborate policy section, which ought to be done as regards each.

LORD CURZON: Does it include the countries we are discussing here?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. I do not know that it goes into the exact details. I am not sure whether it says anything very definite about who is to be the ruler or not.

MR. MONTAGU: The personality of the ruler seems to be the one point in controversy. There is no other difference of opinion between any of the authorities we have consulted.

GENERAL SMUTS: It seems to me we want now to proceed to get the Americans behind us. They are the only people who can get us out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. If they take a determined stand they can help us out of this impossible position. The best way to do that is to get the Arabs behind us.

MR. MONTAGU: Yes. I am not prepared myself to back any of the schemes suggested in the Memorandum.

GENERAL SMUTS: Supposing this consultation goes on, and the Arabs locally all over that area, from Basra to Mosul, express by a very large majority their desire to have Abdullah as their future ruler, does not that settle the question?

* E.C. 2525.

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MR. MONTAGU: Yes. The point I want to emphasise is this: we not only get different advice from different people, but rather different advice in different telegrams from the same person. It seems to me so vital, as Lord Curzon says, to the continued existence of the British Empire, or its continued prestige, to decide on the right solution, some solution not having yet been explored.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree. That is one of my reasons for (in spite of Captain Wilson) being in favour of a Commission, I was anxious to get the thing properly explored from every point of view. I agree it is too late now.

MR. MONTAGU: But is it too late? If everything that is claimed of Abdullah is correct, he might be the right person. If Abdullah is the lascivious, idle creature he is represented to be, he is the ideal man, because he would leave the British Administrator to govern the country wholly. If Abdullah is the person who would be welcomed by the population he is the ideal man. Although I agree it might diplomatically be very difficult to take the fifth alternative in Captain Wilson's telegram, of a British High Commissioner without a titular head for a period of years, it does seem to me we might perfectly well carry through the Peace Conference a suggestion that we do intend to set up an Arab Confederacy, King dom, Presidency, Federation, or something, but that we are not yet prepared with the right solution and we will discuss it. Why should we recommend the appointment of any one person without a sufficient investigation? Captain Wilson says he has been conducting proceedings with a view to discover what is the popular view.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not know much about the East, but as long as our Armies are there, will they not consider what we want?

MR. MONTAGU: Is that necessarily so? Supposing we said, "We are going to nominate an Arab ruler, what Arab ruler would you prefer?" they would help you to find the man they wanted.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They would have a try to guess what you wanted.

LORD CURZON: I think Mr. Montagu is right. I was going to say that I do not think we ought at this stage to select an Arab ruler, even if we can find him; it would be presumptuous folly to do it. Among the questions to be submitted to the people, which they will decide not necessarily in the way they think will please us, but having regard to the manner in which the choice will affect themselves, will be the questions whether they want Mosul to be under Baghdad or to be free, and whether the Kurds are to come in or not. And surely among the questions referred to them it would be quite fair to ask for their views——

GENERAL SMUTS: You are speaking of the Arabs?

LORD CURZON: Yes. It would be only fair to ask them to give their opinion as to who should be the titular head. I think it would be unwise to commit ourselves at this stage. Secondly, it is precisely one of the questions on which the people out there may be trusted.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Nor am I in the least against it. What I am against is this. I do not know Captain Wilson personally; he may be a man of great capability and tact and discretion. At the same time, it is evident if there was anything stupid about the way the propaganda was carried on it might become a very serious matter.

GENERAL SMUTS: It would not be possible to do that. We are getting to a very important stage of the business, and you want a man you can absolutely trust.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Sir Percy Cox would be an excellent ruler, but I do not think he would be very good for this particular post.

GENERAL SMUTS: If at the time when we get to the Peace Conference we put forward our case and are backed up, our position will be strong. That is the point I should like to get to.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like to have consulted Miss Bell. She is still there.

LORD CURZON: Yes. She knows the Arabs so well, and has been there so long, and in so many capacities. We might consult her as to the best way of proceeding, and then decide what we should do.

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GENERAL SMUTS: Miss Bell has told us that the Nakib is hopeless, and that if you have to have an outsider it would be better to have Hussein, as there was not much known against him.

LORD CURZON: Miss Bell is a woman of the greatest ability, and has been there two or three years, and knows the country very well.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think she would be a splendid adviser.

LORD CURZON: How soon has our case to be ready?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: In December.

LORD CURZON: We could not get Miss Bell here by that time.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That will not apply to the actual Peace Conference.

MR. MONTAGU: I should like to ask you whether you would not still consider the possibility, even at this late date, of sending out a Commission, or somebody, for the purpose of investigating what it is the Arabs want? It might well be that they might bring forward a proposal that they would like to have President Wilson. Supposing you sent out somebody with the sole motive of discovering from the population what they want?

LORD CURZON: Is there anybody capable of doing it? Miss Bell cannot be here till the Conference. President Wilson comes about the middle of December. We shall be attending Allied Conferences at once. Our case for Mesopotamia may have to be stated at any time after December 16th. If you send out a man to Baghdad, it will be difficult to find a man of authority who is already familiar with the country. In the East you do not get your "atmosphere" for some weeks or months. You might send a Cabinet Minister, or anybody you like, but I would not attach any value to his opinion until he had been out there for some months.

MR. MONTAGU: The suggestion is that you should go to the Peace Conference without having decided the question.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You might well do that.

MR. MONTAGU: And say at the Peace Conference you are trying to discover who is the right man to put there. We have had Colonel Lawrence and Sir Mark Sykes, and Miss Bell is greater than all of them. What you want to find out is what is in the minds of the Arabs, which you can get with the assistance of Miss Bell on the spot, but Miss Bell could not give it to you in this room.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The other course would be to ask Captain Wilson to appoint a small Commission, for Miss Bell and somebody else to carry on these investigations and let us know their views.

LORD CURZON: We have got Miss Bell's view.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, six months ago.

LORD CURZON: Is it possible, although Sir Percy Cox has gone, to put before him the new situation and ask his view? He is serving in Persia, but it is inevitable that he will go back to Mesopotamia, whether now or later. Could we not ask his view? Supposing he has changed his mind, and says you may have a son of the Sherif?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not see any reason at all against asking him. General Smuts thinks it would be a good thing to send Sir Percy Cox back immediately. At the same time, I hope we shall not do that. He seems to be doing his work in Persia very well, he is doing important things there, and is in the process of making recommendations on a series of important questions. After all, Mesopotamia is very important, and clearly it is quite possible that Persia might be more important. I should have thought it would be a good plan to ask Sir Percy Cox if he has any views. I should think the best plan would be to ask Captain Wilson, either by himself or preferably with Miss Bell, to consult the Arabs in all that area, and let us know their view as soon as possible.

GENERAL SMUTS: That would be the strongest case we could put forward to the Peace Conference, and say "This is what they desire."

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would like to warn Captain Wilson not to give any ground for suspicion. There are French people out there who are watching everything we do.

LORD CURZON: General Wilson, your views are very important, will you give us the military aspect of the question?

GENERAL WILSON: In putting forward our case at Versailles presently, everything will depend on the attitude of the Americans, and I understand General Smuts to say that, in order to get a favourable verdict from the Americans we must get the Arabs on our side. That is what it comes to?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is what I said.

GENERAL SMUTS: That is the argument. I think we should build up our case and carry the Americans with us, and I think we can only do that by pointing to local self-determination, and we must try and find it out by the swiftest *bonâ fide* machinery we can institute for the purpose.

LORD CURZON: Do you favour the lines of policy suggested to-day, General Wilson?

GENERAL WILSON: Yes. They seem to be quite sound, as far as I am concerned; but how exactly we are to find out what the Arabs think without giving the French reason to believe that we are encroaching on their preserves I do not know.

LORD CURZON: We are not encroaching, because we have no candidates of our own to recommend. It might be said that we are exerting pressure, but we only want the man the Arabs choose.

GENERAL WILSON: That is very strong, on the face of it.

GENERAL SMUTS: The enquiry should proceed on two points. The Arabs should say in the first place whether they are in favour of an Arab State under British tutelage. Secondly, do they want Abdullah as their ruler? If we could have opinions ascertained on those points, that is the way to do it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, and put definite questions. There is a third point: Do you favour a single Arab Government in Mesopotamia, or a division between Baghdad and Mosul?

GENERAL WILSON: I suppose you could not associate a Frenchman with this lady and Captain Wilson?

GENERAL SMUTS: I would rather take a man like D. . .

LORD ROBERT CECIL: An intelligent American would be a different thing. The French would report as they wished whatever the facts were.

GENERAL SMUTS: If we knew what it was going to be after an enquiry, we should know the grounds and could proceed.

GENERAL WILSON: There is a Major More, of General Marshall's Staff, who knows the country well, and who happens to be at home at the present moment. He might be worth consulting.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Certainly.

LORD CURZON: General Macdonogh, you take a great interest in these matters. Do your views incline in the same direction?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Yes, entirely. In my Paper I suggested the only way in which we could get out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was by a combination of President Wilson and the policy of self-determination. The thing you have to do is to find out what the Arabs think.

MR. MONTAGU: Before this discussion, I had a draft telegram I rather wanted to send to Captain Wilson, which I think might be adapted to meet what seems to be the sense of the Committee, if I may read it. It is in answer to Captain Wilson's fears about the Anglo-French Agreement.

"The Anglo-French Declaration was intended primarily to clear up present situation in Syria created by Arab suspicions of French intentions. Ultimate status of all Arab provinces will be settled at Peace Conference, and this should be understood by all concerned. Meanwhile, the Declaration lays down that it is the policy of His Majesty's Government to aid in establishing native

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Governments in the liberated areas, and not to impose on the populations any Government which they dislike. Subject to those two conditions we desire to see in Mesopotamia the strongest and most settled Government possible, and we are prepared to give all British assistance necessary for that end, including an army of occupation. Doubtless, owing to the local conditions, and the absence of any outstanding Arab personality, and of any class of persons qualified to hold high offices, it will be necessary for some time to establish a very large measure of British control, and foreign relations will be entirely under British control. But there will be no annexation, and as far as can be seen at present no formal protectorate. The position is more likely to be analogous to that of Egypt before the war, minus the Capitulations. This does not differ materially from proposals in Sir P. Cox's memorandum of the 22nd April. Your administrative action and official utterances should be guided by the above principles, and you should be able to satisfy our friends that we are not going to leave them in the lurch. Meanwhile, we are considering the best form of native government to set up, and should be glad to receive the advice and assistance of yourself and your advisers on this point. Communications to President Wilson should not be allowed, but you may receive and report any addresses which really representative bodies may wish to make to His Majesty's Government in favour of British control, or on any other point connected with the future government of the country."

That was the rough draft before this discussion. I was going to suggest that a telegram of that kind might still be sent, with the concrete suggestion that we are anxious to meet the wishes of the Arab population as regards the *personnel* of the Government, and that he, Miss Bell, and anybody else he might suggest, ought to conduct an enquiry and report as soon as possible.

LORD CURZON: I think you will have to put to him the direct questions. The questions we want to ask are these:—

(1.) Do they want a single Arab State from Mosul down to the Gulf?

It is vital to have an answer to that question. The answer will probably be in the affirmative. I do not know that we are particularly concerned, but I should prefer it to be in the alternative—Do the Arabs in all those areas want to be united in a single Arab State from Mosul to the Gulf, under British tutelage?

(2.) Admitting British tutelage as a necessity of the case, do they want an Arab ruler to be set up as the titular head of the State?
(3.) If so, who is the man?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is a political necessity for us to have an Arab ruler, and I would suggest that they could get out of that because I suspect a great deal of the educated opinion would prefer not to have an Arab ruler, but would prefer to be under the direct administration of this country. I suspect they would much prefer that, but for political reasons we cannot do that.

LORD CURZON: You think that local governments, councils, municipal and otherwise, will not be enough for President Wilson, or perhaps King Hussein, or for both?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, both. If President Wilson found Hussein, whom he regarded as an Arab and as an authority on native opinion, against that, it might make a great difficulty for us. I do not see the least objection to having as a figurehead an Amir.

MR. MONTAGU: If you can get the right one. I should have thought that, rather than have a wrong one, you would have had an Arab Republic.

LORD CURZON: I think we are all agreed.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. They are only small details of procedure, and anything you settle I shall be satisfied with.

LORD CURZON: May we go on to the next branch of the case at another meeting?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, certainly. What is there in the way?

LORD CURZON: We cannot do it in your absence.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like the Paper I referred to to be circulated.

LORD CURZON: Do you think we ought to take Syria, the Lebanon, Armenia, and so on, at the same time as Palestine, or have two separate discussions?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They overlap a little, but Palestine is more or less a separate discussion. I do not think there is the slightest doubt about what ought to be done there, if we can get it.

GENERAL SMUTS: Perhaps we can do the whole lot together.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You will let Sir Eyre Crowe's Paper* be circulated—the little Paper.

LORD CURZON: The Paper about the Caucasus?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: We have no Paper from any Office putting forward the position as regards Syria or Palestine.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is one dealing with the whole of our treaty obligations.

(*Lord Robert Cecil withdrew.*)

LORD CURZON: We will look at that and have another meeting. The first question we are all agreed upon is to get Captain Wilson, in finding out the opinion of the people, to ascertain whether they are in favour of a single Arab State from the north of Mosul down to the sea. Secondly, there is the question of an Arab ruler. I myself should be willing to put the question, "Do they want him?" Apart from the diplomatic considerations named by Lord Robert, it seems to me absurd, if they do not want such a man at all, that we should appoint him.

MR. MONTAGU: I think that question should be put. It is likely the right man does not exist. There is something more important than diplomatic considerations.

GENERAL SMUTS: Does not our whole case have the bottom knocked out of it?

MR. MONTAGU: Suppose there is a series of Nakibs, or whatever you like to call them, without a titular head?

LORD CURZON: I should like to put the second question: Are they in favour of a single Arab ruler of the State? Thirdly, if so, to whom do they incline? I do not know what the view of the Committee generally is about the matter.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I am in favour of what Lord Robert says.

LORD CURZON: And not give them a voice in the matter?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: It is an essential part of our policy to have an Arab ruler, and has been ever since the beginning.

LORD CURZON: It has never been mentioned except when discussing the question with Sir Percy Cox. He suggested the Nakib of Baghdad, but he did not suggest the Nakib of Baghdad should be the head of a State from Mosul to the sea. There was to be a man in Baghdad, and a separate ruler in Basra.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: We have always spoken of the Arab facade, and that indicated to me that we are contemplating an Arab ruler.

MR. MONTAGU: What does an Arab facade mean——one Arab ruler? Why not three or four?

GENERAL SMUTS: That makes me incline to the belief that we must put all three questions. It is possible the Arabs themselves may say, "We want three: we want a man at Basra, another at Baghdad, and another at Mosul." I do not see any objection to that, from our point of view, except that we do not carry Hussein with us. If that is the Arab view I do not think we should object. I am afraid we shall have to put in that question.

LORD CURZON: I think we ought to have the three questions. Perhaps Mr. Montagu will draft a telegram. We must be careful what we say about a

* E.C. 2339.

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British protectorate. There is a rather ambiguous phrase in Captain Wilson's telegram, "and on clear understanding, on which the inhabitants of the country themselves rely, that a protectorate will in due course be declared." He does not mean "declare by a formal instrument" the creation of a British protectorate, but only that it shall be there in the background.

GENERAL SMUTS: That is a very good telegram.

LORD CURZON: I think we had better on another day take up the remainder of the case.

GENERAL SMUTS: Is it possible to have a statement of facts about the other areas?

LORD CURZON: There are two memoranda about the Caucasus. But they are not a statement of facts. We also want the different opinions about it.

GENERAL SMUTS: There is Batum and the Black Sea. We should have to take a line at the Conference about these things. What line are we going to take?

MR. OLIPHANT: We have three Papers* in the Foreign Office which we ought to have in which these questions are discussed. No actual policy has been laid down, except that we thought we might get the French out of Syria by pushing further north. Armenia we are getting into, and right up into the three Caucasian Republics.

LORD CURZON: That is a suggestion, but I want something different. We have arrived at a quick and easy solution to-day because the history has been before us. I took the trouble to do that, but how am I to do the same with regard to the other questions? There is not the same volume of literature, but we ought to know what the Government has done. I do not know. There is this question about Syria. We have been discussing the Eastern aspect of the case, but there remains what we have done, and what we have said to the French, and how far we are committed to Faisal.

GENERAL SMUTS: We ought to have that, and I am anxious to have it as the basis of our case.

MR. MONTAGU: Is not time of importance, too? It looks as if the Peace negotiations will be begun early next month.

LORD CURZON: Not till the middle of December, and Mesopotamia will not be the first thing taken. Perhaps it will not be taken before January next, but we must be ready by the middle of December.

MR. MONTAGU: It seems we are not ready with any of the cases against Turkey at all, so far as the Committee is concerned. I do not know when the Brief, which is being prepared under the direction of General Smuts, will be ready.

GENERAL SMUTS: The Brief cannot be settled before the policy is settled. It is with a view to settling a policy that we are here.

MR. MONTAGU: It is important that we should have these negotiations, to consider first of all the policy to be discussed, then have the Brief prepared, and then be ready to negotiate within six weeks.

LORD CURZON: We have cleared a good deal of ground to-day. I do not know what Sir Erle Richards thinks, but with the aid of the Papers and the notes taken to-day, the elements of the case are there. The same will apply to two other areas. First, Caucasia, Trans-Caucasus, extending down to and including Armenia —they are two parts of one question. It is upon that that I want not only the suggestions of Sir Eyre Crowe and others, but the facts of what we have done. Then, thirdly, there are Syria and Palestine. I do not know which we had better take next. We will take whichever you like, say the Caucasus.

MR. OLIPHANT: We can get that ready.

LORD CURZON: And then Syria and Palestine.

We will fix a meeting provisionally for Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock, and if we have to alter the time we will.

C

* E.C. 2243, 2556, 2570.

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Lord Curzon.

Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C., 40th Meeting.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 2, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD R. CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended :

SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

SIR JOHN BEALE, K.B.E., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Food.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Captain E. ABRAHAM, Assistant Secretary, War Cabinet.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Middle Eastern Questions : Caucasus and Armenia.

1. THE Chairman said that at their last Meeting the Committee had discussed the question of the future of the Arab States which lie along the eastern fringe of the great block of territory which they were examining with a view to making the British case for the Peace Conference, and they had agreed to discuss, at the present Meeting, our policy and our case in respect of the various States that had sprung into existence in the regions of the Caucasus and Armenia. As regards Armenia, they had examined the case not only in its general aspect, but also on the narrower issues raised by a number of

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papers relating to American proposals of relief. Those proposals might at first sight appear to raise a narrow issue, but when they came up for discussion it would be found that the larger problem of policy lay behind them, as it was impossible to decide what Powers or agencies should be employed to give relief to Armenia without raising the big question of the future of Armenia, and the particular Power or Powers which would be charged with the task of looking after Armenia in the future. The Chairman then stated, with regard to Armenia, the broad features of the situation as it had emerged from the events not merely of the war, but of the period which had elapsed since the Berlin Treaty.

A general discussion followed, in which the Committee considered the question of the future of the various Caucasian regions, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, Daghestan, &c.

(*The discussion was adjourned.*)

(A verbatim report of the discussion is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.)

Armenia: American Relief.

2. With regard to the question of the proposals made by America for affording relief to Armenia, the Committee had before them a memorandum* from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Secretary, Eastern Committee, dated the 29th November, 1918, covering a note from the American Chargé d'Affaires, dated the 21st November, to Mr. Balfour, in which it was stated that the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief desired to undertake at once relief measures for the rehabilitation of the oppressed nationalities of the Turkish Empire in Constantinople and Asia Minor, and proposed to send a ship with a cargo of foodstuffs, clothing, agricultural machinery, seed, medical supplies, and the like, together with some 300 doctors, relief workers, mechanics, agriculturists, and so on. Mr. Laughlin's note further stated that the foregoing plan enjoyed the complete approval of the United States Government and was part of Mr. Hoover's food scheme, and His Majesty's Government were asked whether they had any objection to offer to the immediate despatch of this ship.

In a Foreign Office memorandum* on Mr. Laughlin's note, it was suggested that in considering the question of the despatch of this large Mission it would be as well to bear in mind the great economic importance of the regions which the Mission proposed to visit, and the possibility that the Mission might include among its members persons who might not be exclusively devoted to its professed humanitarian object. The coast of the Black Sea near Trebizond was believed to be very rich in copper, and the Arghana mines, near Diarbekr, were known to be among the richest copper-mines in the world; and the fear had been expressed that unless we made an effort to secure an interest in these properties, they would inevitably pass into the hands of the Americans. Moreover, as the United States were not at war with Turkey, American citizens would be in a better position to acquire concessions and mining properties in Turkey than their British competitors, who, presumably, are still hampered by the "Trading with the Enemy Act."

Sir John Beale said that nobody knew what Mr. Hoover's general plan was, and he thought that the present proposal offered a convenient opportunity of obtaining information on the subject. He thought that if this offer were accepted as part of Mr. Hoover's general plan, we might to some extent prejudice ourselves when that plan came up for consideration.

After a discussion (which is recorded *verbatim* as an Annex to these Minutes),

* E.C. 2540.

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The Committee decided—

1. That the Foreign Office should reply to the United States Chargé d'Affaires in the following sense :—

   (a.) *His Majesty's Government have no objection to raise to the proposal.*

   (b.) *His Majesty's Government understood, of course, that before the ship was actually despatched the French Government would be equally consulted.*

   (c.) *That the British Government and local authorities would be prepared to give the Relief Mission every assistance in their power.*

   (d.) *On the southern side, our own Armenian fund would do what it could to back up the American efforts by independent action.*

2. That the general question of food supplies referred to in the telegram should not be raised in the above reply.

'(Initialled.) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
December 2, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 2, 1918, at 3 p.m.

THE CAUCASUS AND ARMENIA.

LORD CURZON: Last week we discussed the question of the future of the Arab States that lie along the Eastern fringe of the great block of territory which we are examining with a view to making our case for the Peace Conference, and we then agreed to confine our attention to-day to our policy and our case with regard to the various States that have sprung into existence in the regions of the Caucasus and Armenia.

As regards Armenia, the case is before us not only in its general aspect this afternoon, but also on the narrower issues that are raised by a number of Papers, some of which have been circulated to the Committee, relating to American proposals of relief. These proposals raise what may seem at first sight to be a narrow issue, but the moment you examine them, and as soon as you attempt to arrive at a decision with regard to them, you find that you are face to face with the larger problem of policy that lies behind, and indeed, that it is impossible to arrive at a decision upon the powers or agencies that are to be employed to give relief to the Armenians in their present unhappy state without at once raising the big question of the future of Armenia and the choice of the Great Powers, or the particular Great Power, which is to be charged with the task of looking after Armenia in the troublesome years that lie before us.

Since we met last week there have been circulated to the Committee a number of Papers of great importance. We now have been able to read the full statement* of the case that has been drawn up by the Foreign Office, with maps attached thereto, and, further, we have the Papers† already before us by Sir Eyre Crowe and other authorities, in which the future of that part of the world is discussed and suggestions are put forward. I think it will help us in arriving at a decision if, with regard to Armenia, I state, as I did the other day—I am glad to say it will be much more brief—the broad features of the situation as it has emerged from the events not merely of the war, but of the period that has elapsed since the Berlin Treaty.

As the Committee will remember, it was under article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin that our special interest in Armenia arose. The Turks pledged themselves by that treaty to introduce ameliorations and reforms into the provinces inhabited by Armenians. Those were the exact terms of the clause in the treaty to which I refer. You will observe their general character. It did not say "the six vilayets inhabited by Armenians"; in fact, there was no geographical limitation at all. It said, in the most general terms, "the provinces inhabited by Armenians," a phrase which was as fraught with ambiguity as any that had ever been introduced into international treaties. Those pledges on the part of the Turks, it is unnecessary to say, were never fulfilled; and those of us who have been in politics during the last quarter of a century remember well the Parliamentary troubles that arose out of the series of massacres of Armenians by the Turks that disfigured the years 1895 to 1897, that were repeated in the year 1909, and that culminated in, perhaps, the most atrocious crime of all, the practical extermination of the Armenians in many parts of the country in the second year of the war, 1915. During all this period the Powers have been unable to agree upon military intervention, and have done little else but address protests, more or less futile, to the Turkish Government. Since the war began our spokesmen have from time to time indulged in general promises not merely of friendship and succour, but of liberation to the Armenian peoples. No definite engagements have been entered into, but there certainly has been a general understanding—to which Lord Robert Cecil has himself on more than one occasion given utterance, either in the House of Commons or in published letters—that the liberation of Armenians from the Turkish yoke was one of the objects which we set before ourselves in this war, unless we satisfied which, we should not be willing to conclude peace.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is a statement in the Peace Terms drawn up in the beginning of 1917, in answer to the joint American note.

LORD CURZON: I think Lord Robert Cecil is right. We specifically named the Armenians in the statement drawn up at Downing Street, to which we were all parties. It therefore has more than the sanction of even any speech by himself in the House of Commons.

* E.C. 2525. † E.C. 2132, 2133, 2157, 2243, 2467, 2556, 2570, 2599, 2632.

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A rather disquieting feature was introduced into the case when the Sykes-Picot Agreement was concluded in May 1916. Under the unfortunate partition of spheres that was contemplated by that arrangement, the whole of Cilicia and the greater part of the three Armenian vilayets of Sivas, Kharput, and Diarbekr were included in the Blue Zone which was assigned to the French, and in which France has the right to establish such direct or indirect intervention as she may require. The remaining Armenian vilayets of Erzerum, Van, and Bitlis, as well as the vilayet of Trebizond, were included in the Russian sphere. That part of the Agreement has lapsed, whatever may be said of the remainder, and in regard to those parts of Armenia or of Turkey in Asia partly inhabited by Armenians, we have an absolutely free hand. During the war the Armenians in the northern part of this area, inhabiting what is often called Russian Armenia, have set up a sort of independent republic of their own, which is still in some kind of existence, with a capital at Erivan. The rest of the Armenians, I am afraid, are, for the most part, fugitives on the face of the earth, and the telegrams that we have read during the last few days from General Clayton and from other authorities in that part of the world show the lamentable extent of the distress from which these wretched exiles are suffering.

Since the armistice was concluded the Turks have been called upon under the terms of the Armistice—which, however, was a little vague on the point—to evacuate Cilicia, with a view, in the main, of securing it as a possible nucleus of an Armenian State in the future.

Now the Americans come upon the scene with these proposals as regards material assistance, which in themselves are not only philanthropic, but seem to be directed to a very urgent need, but which are thought in some quarters to cloak a political purpose of some seriousness. This is a very brief summary of the events as regards Armenia, and it brings us to the present stage.

Now as to our general policy with regard to Armenia, I imagine that there can be little doubt, whether we look at it from the point of view of our pledges or of our political interest. We want to have an independent Armenia, an Armenia which, if not now, at some time in the future, and whether its boundaries are narrow or wide, shall be a self-governing community. Our reasons for desiring that object are, it seems to me, three in number. In the first place, adopting the terminology which has become popular with regard to Palestine, we desire to provide a national home for the scattered peoples of the Armenian race. As long as they are diffused in helpless and hopeless minorities, in areas inhabited for the most part by the Kurds and Turks, every man's hand is raised against them, and any chance of settled life or autonomous existence cannot be said to exist. Secondly, we want to set up an Armenian State as a palisade, if I may use the metaphor, against the Pan-Turanian ambitions of the Turks, which may overflow the Caucasian regions and carry great peril to the countries of the Middle East and East. Thirdly, we want to constitute something like an effective barrier against the aggression—if not now, at any rate in the future—of any foreign Powers, impelled, by ambition or by other motives, to press forward in that direction. That, I think, is a fair statement of the reasons for which probably all of us here desire the erection of an independent Armenian State.

At this stage two questions are involved. The first is that of the size and boundaries of the State, as to which I do not propose to say much. The second is as to the Great Power—because obviously some Power is required—which shall take it in charge, and, to use a popular phrase, be the mandatory of the Powers in general to guide and sustain Armenia on her march to the future that we desire. If you will read the case that has been drawn up by the Foreign Office, you will see that they favour what I may call a larger Armenia. That is shown in the map which is attached. If you glance at that map for a moment, you will see that the Armenia that is contemplated in the Foreign Office Memorandum starts in the eastern corner of the Levant, from Mersina. It then runs along the Taurus range and the western side of the Anti-Taurus past Sivas, which is included in the country coloured Armenian, and reaches the Black Sea at a point marked as Cape Yasun. This area includes two ports, one of them inconsiderable, the other of great importance, Kerasund and Trebizond. If you follow the boundaries to the east and south-east, you will find that it further includes the very important centres of Erzerum, Bayazid, Mush, Bitlis, and Van. Its southern limits are a line that runs from south of the Gulf of Alexandretta to the north of Antioch, through Aintab, Diarbekr, and Sert, to the northern boundaries of Jezireh and Kurdistan. I will not trouble to analyse those boundaries any more closely at the moment. I will merely point out to the Committee that it would be the greatest mistake to suppose that this

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is an area mainly inhabitated by Armenians. I do not suppose any of us has any exact figures as to the proportions of the populations there, but my own opinion is that, particularly in view of the devastation wrought by these massacres and by the incidents of war, the Armenians would be in a decided minority in that area, and you would find that Turks, Kurds, Afghans, and all sorts of people of other Asiatic races, constitute the majority of the population. I merely point that out because this large area is one which seems to me to be greatly in excess of anything that could possibly be demanded by the numerical strength of the Armenians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I have some figures about the Armenians. I do not know if you would like to have them now.

LORD CURZON: We will have them presently. I am just going briefly through this. That, I understand, is the Foreign Office case.

Then there are other great authorities on the subject, of whom Commander Hogarth is one, whose Paper* has been before us, who advocate a very much smaller Armenia, practically moving the Armenians from the northern areas down to the south and concentrating them in, or in the neighbourhood of, Cilicia. Even this smaller area southwards, to which I am now coming, will include many non-Armenian elements, but their number in relation to the Armenians will be nothing like so great and the proportion will not be anything like so large as if we contemplated a larger Armenia on the lines of the Foreign Office memorandum. I may indicate the lines of the smaller Armenia suggested by Commander Hogarth, who has a wide acquaintance with this region, probably greater than any of the authorities who have advised us. He suggested that the smaller Armenia should start from the mouth of the Geuk Su, which is close to Mersina, that it should then run along the line of the Taurus and the Anti-Taurus to Geurun on the Tokma Su, which is in the heart of the country. The line should then run to Divrik, to the north, then south to Kharput, and down the Euphrates, to Birijik, and then to Alexandretta Bay near a place marked on the map called Payas. I need not further pursue the limits of this region, but, looking at it from the geographical point of view, there are these two distinct suggestions, the one for a larger, and the other for a smaller, Armenia. So much for geography and boundaries.

As I said, there is a second big question, as to which of the Great Powers should be the mandatory to carry out these arrangements and to exercise a tutelage over the Armenians in this period of trouble and probation. In accordance with our general policy of self-determination I imagine we shall agree that the Armenians must be themselves the deciding factor as regards their future. But here again it is extremely difficult to discover the means by which we can ascertain what the Armenians really desire. I imagine that if the Armenian population, both at home and scattered, were polled, in all probability they would opt for this country. But I should not like myself to spend much time in discussing that aspect of the case, for two reasons. In the first place we have already—and, whatever happens at the Peace Conference, we shall have in the future—far too much upon our own hands in those parts of the world to be able to undertake any responsibility so colossal as that of being responsible for the future of the Armenian State. And later on, when we come to the question of the Caucasus, I shall endeavour to show how the treatment of Armenia probably carries with it the treatment of the Caucasus, and that the responsibilities assumed for the one, would almost inevitably lead to the assumption of similar, and, perhaps, even more onerous responsibilities with regard to the other. I therefore imagine that no one in this Committee will look with very friendly eyes upon the idea of our undertaking this great task.

Only two other Powers are possible. I rule out the smaller Powers, because it is quite obvious that they have neither the resources nor the forces, neither the moral nor the political prestige, which would enable them to undertake a task of this description. They are fully concerned in looking after their own boundaries and interests without embarking upon tasks of difficulty in the heart of Asia. The only two remaining great Powers that we need seriously consider are France and America. France has undoubtedly, if we are to attach value, as she does, to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, acquired a direct political interest in the future of some, at any rate, of the Armenian vilayets. What her feelings or susceptibilities may be about the matter I do not know. It may be she would be willing to undertake the custody of Armenia; and the Foreign Office in several papers have very powerfully argued that there would be nothing more to our interest than to divert her from ambitions, very often inconvenient to ourselves and unpalatable to the Arabs, in the more southerly regions of Syria and Arabia, and send her off on a more northerly mission to the Armenian parts of the country. A

* E.C. 2302.

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further question arises; if she were willing to assume responsibility for Armenia, would she be willing to let it carry with it responsibility for the Caucasus? I can give no opinion about that because I do not know, but I shall argue presently that the two are really inseparable aspects of the same problem.

The other great Power whose name is mentioned is the United States of America. Here we have what I called at the beginning the smaller issue of relief. About that I will wait for the Foreign Office to give their opinion, although, in my own mind, I have very little doubt that in the peculiar and distressing circumstances of the case we are bound to take assistance for the Armenians from almost any trustworthy quarter from which it is offered. The question as regards the American offer is complicated by the apprehension entertained in very responsible quarters that very much more lies behind it. We have good reason to believe that the Committee of Union and Progress at Constantinople—who are still more or less in power, and certainly have not been dethroned, who are wholly to be distrusted, who are endeavouring at every stage to escape from the conditions of the armistice, and who have to be most carefully watched—have devised a plan of escaping from what they think would be the worse fate that may befall them at the hands of Great Britain and France, by placing their interests in the hands of President Wilson and the United States of America. Indeed, we have heard of this body at Constantinople, and of nine newspapers in its pay, who are definitely putting forward a case that not merely Armenia, but the whole of the oppressed nationalities hitherto under the rule of the Turks should be taken over by the United States of America; that the latter Power should be invited to be the mandatory for all these countries; that they should provisionally occupy and administer these territories for a term of years; and that eventually when the Constituent Assembly, which is supposed to be the solution of all these problems, is set up, and a national Government evolved, the United States of America should retire. It is not surprising to hear that when a proposal of this sort is put forward, many others receive it with the greatest suspicion. I have seen in the Foreign Office papers a letter from Dr. Weizmann, the spokesman of the Jews, who regards these proposals as being of a most sinister character, and who tells us that this great organisation with a missionary and humanitarian façade is really political and commercial in its essence, and that in the background of the proposals to give relief and succour to suffering peoples is a desire to secure concessions, to get hold of the copper mines, and so on, and to acquire a predominant material and commercial interest for America in Asia Minor.

These, I think, are the main features of the case as they present themselves to us to-day. I have given this little exordium by way of clearing the ground, and I think I had better now ask the Foreign Office to state their case with regard to American relief, and what is the line they propose to adopt.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think it is worth spending much time on the question of American relief. I agree with Lord Curzon that we cannot possibly refuse the offer. I do not see that it can do any harm. I do not myself anticipate there is very much behind it, but even if there is, I do not think we can possibly reject it. I do not think it is arguable myself, and that is the view of the Foreign Office.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: Mr. Balfour thinks that we ought to say that we are quite ready to welcome it, if the French agree.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: In view of the Sykes-Picot Agreement we think the French ought to be consulted. What Mr. Balfour proposed to do was to send a telegram to the Americans to say that so far as we were concerned we had no objection, but that we thought that they ought to consult the French before they acted, and leaving it to the Americans to consult the French.

LORD CURZON: There are two points of view that we must hear something about. There is the military point of view; I daresay General Thwaites will have something to say upon that. Then there is the food point of view, and Sir John Beale has come here to speak to us about that. I think there is something from the War Office which indicates that they look upon the proposal with some suspicion. Is that so, General Thwaites?

GENERAL THWAITES: Only with reference to the commercial interests. There was a telegram the other day which has been circulated.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I have not seen that. I am afraid I only see a part of the Papers now.

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GENERAL THWAITES : It must have been circulated a few days ago.

LORD CURZON : Then it is with the Papers, and we have seen it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Even if they are after a commercial enterprise, do you think it would be possible for us to refuse the offer ?

GENERAL THWAITES : No, I do not think so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : It is all mixed up with other things, as everything is in America.

LORD CURZON : As you know, the copper mines near Diarbekr are among the most important in Asia, and, I suppose, among the most important in the world. There is something in one of the telegrams that is a little suspicious, because, after talking about lorries and transport, and so on, there is a phrase that alludes to such extras as mechanicians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : They always do that, and mix them up.

GENERAL THWAITES : It is in the back of my mind that there is something of that kind behind it all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I think it is most probable. You cannot avoid that, I think.

GENERAL SMUTS : This is the phrase : " 300 doctors, relief workers, mechanics, agriculturists, and so forth."

LORD CURZON : Yes, " mechanics, and so forth." That is a very large and dubious phrase.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Even if it be so, assuming we are agreed that at any rate part of Armenia must go to the French or to the Americans, and that we do not want to take it ourselves ; if it is going to the Americans it does not matter to us at all whether they are going to develop it commercially or not. If it is going to the French, it is a matter for the French and the Americans, and not for us.

GENERAL THWAITES : Yes. However, from the military point of view, the War Office are not prepared to take any action with reference to it.

LORD CURZON : You do not take the line that you would regard the infusion of America as involving a military peril ?

GENERAL THWAITES : Except so far as this, that if they are going in for commercial interests it may expand.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I do not believe the Americans would ever send troops to Armenia.

GENERAL THWAITES : No.

LORD CURZON : That is a very contingent danger. Sir John Beale, do you wish to say anything on the matter ?

SIR JOHN BEALE : Yes, there is one remark I should like to make. I did not see the Papers until I got here, but I notice that a suggestion is put forward by the American Government that this is part of Mr. Hoover's general plan. I do not know what Mr. Hoover's general plan is. He has not told anybody in this country what his plan is. If you must accept the offer on his part as part of his general plan, you may to some extent prejudice yourself when the general plan comes up for discussion.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I had forgotten they put it forward as part of a general plan.

SIR JOHN BEALE : That is so.

GENERAL SMUTS : " Mr. Lansing adds that the foregoing plan enjoys the complete approval of the Government of the United States and is part of Mr. Hoover's food scheme."

SIR JOHN BEALE : It must be remembered that Mr. Hoover is about the most successful mining engineer in the world. That may have some bearing on this question. When he was here in July and August his suggestion was that the European Allies should set up an Inter-Allied Food Authority in America to look after all food supplies.

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At that time he spoke of it as being necessary that we should ourselves organise and be prepared to deal with the dreadful conditions that would follow peace—feeding the enemy countries, the neutrals, and others in such places as are devastated. The organisation he suggested was set up and is now working and doing its job, and is supervising the feeding of the Allies. Directly the Armistice was announced Mr. Hoover started to leave America in order to discuss the position with us, but we at once found the Americans in this country ceased to take any part in the discussion. Mr. Hoover arrived last Saturday week. We saw him on the Sunday and had a talk, but we got no intimation whatever as to what his plans were for the future. All he did say, and with complete definiteness, was that this organisation that he had set up in July and August was no longer suitable; it was a war-time organisation, but was not suitable for anything afterwards, and that it must not dominate any other nation's supplies. He then went to France and has not yet returned. He was to have returned to-morrow, but that has been postponed, and we do not know when he comes back. Informally, I am told he is absolutely of opinion that this Inter-Allied organisation has come to an end, and we have learned informally that he is himself beginning to ship supplies to various parts of the world from America. That applies not only to Armenia, which you have under discussion now, but will apply to enemy countries, and the Balkan countries very largely. I am afraid I must drag this in, because it is really part of the same problem. My information is that Roumania is in a condition of terrible starvation, and Bulgaria too, although perhaps that is less important, but Roumania undoubtedly is. Serbia is in a condition of great difficulty as well. I was entrusted by the British Government to look into these questions of relief, and I have failed to see what they are. All I have been able to find is that there is no money available of any sort for any relief scheme, and it is essential that, if any relief scheme is to be started—it is quite easy to do it, it is only a question of shipping food-supplies in small quantities while you look round—you must have money to spend and shipping to use. You can then send supplies, and look round and see what is happening. Mr. Hoover's mind has run in precisely the same way, and he is, in fact, doing it from America. He is sending cargoes of food to Armenia, to Poland, and many other parts of the world, and he is establishing his position so that he can do it. The British Government are doing none of these things, and can do none of them, and cannot begin. We have an Armenian Relief Fund, but you cannot send food from this country to Armenia; you must send it from the supplying country, and we have no exchange at our disposal for sending food to Armenia, assuming you wish to compete there and hold your own with America in this matter. I am quite convinced in my own mind that supplies must be sent to Armenia, and probably America is the right place, but I would strongly deprecate even the mere acceptance of this American offer until we know what the whole scheme is. Even though you let Armenia go, I imagine the British Empire could not let Serbia, Albania, Roumania, and countries like that continue as they are. It is quite likely that if America takes over the whole business and made a success of it, you would find, in fact, the shipments to the Allies would interfere with the shipments to those places. They will go short, there will be an appeal to this country, and this country will either have to interfere in something which has been handed over to America. or else say it is powerless.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What places do you mean?

SIR JOHN BEALE: There are direct instructions, no doubt, and I speak without any sanction. It is merely what I have gathered. When the Americans were here in July, they thought if they set up an international organisation here to draw its supplies mainly from America, that America would dominate. As I have said, the international organisation is in America; if it is to be in London, the British Government must do it, if relief is to operate from London. This food organisation, having control of the buyer, is controlling the whole of the American market. Mr. Hoover is a great producer, and he is irritated very much. America is the party controlling the price they get for their produce; they are very annoyed, and they say the organisation must be purely American or there will be political differences in America.

LORD CURZON: Perhaps you may not have seen the actual terms* of the proposal. There is at the present moment in New York a very powerful body, largely missionary in composition, the leading spirits of which are a Dr. Barton and others. Their names have been given to us, and they are men of mark and moment in the United States. Their proposal is that a ship laden with the necessary food, personnel, &c., should sail from America, that it should come direct to Europe, that it should be

* E C. 2540.

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given a passage through the Dardanelles, that it should go into the Black Sea, and should land at one or other of the ports on the southern coast of the Black Sea. The relief could not be confined to that part of the world, because some of the most distressed parts of Armenia can only be reached from the Mediterranean and the Levant, and no doubt other stores would have to be sent to Alexandretta or to ports in the south. One of the leaders of the American movement is a Dr. Gates, at Constantinople; and Admiral Webb, who is acting for us at Constantinople, has been in consultation with Dr. Gates upon the matter. The idea which Admiral Webb has recommended, in agreement with Dr. Gates, is that these expeditions should be sent; that there should be practically two expeditions, one to Sansum, which is a port in Turkish territory, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, and also to Trebizond, further to the east; and that another expedition should go to Alexandretta, in the northern corner of the Levant. Admiral Webb proposes this, which I think is a very fair suggestion. He says a good deal of hard work will be involved, and you want people who know something of the country, which the American missionaries and philanthropists probably would not, and he proposes to attach two or three British officers to these parties, unless that is likely to cause trouble with the French, which to my mind it would not. That would be an excellent thing to do, I think, both by way of facilitating the object of the Mission, and, if necessary, of keeping a watch upon the activities of our American friends. Admiral Webb's proposal is that we should charter, fill up, and send two ships, one to go to the Black Sea and the other to go to Alexandretta. The case is enormously urgent. It is impossible to exaggerate the degree of distress. Would a proposal of that sort, to send these ships to those two quarters, interfere with the general scheme which it is so essential to maintain?

SIR JOHN BEALE: I am afraid I do not know anything about the politics of what you have been telling us to-day. My view is that when you come nearer home, to these other countries, you are almost sure to find that critical jealousies and troubles will make it almost impossible for you really to relieve, and that there will have to be some sort of Inter-Allied relief. It is a possibility. I suggest that, if you agree to America doing this, America should do it. As to America being the sole body charged with the relief of Poland, Serbia, Albania, and places of that sort, you may find you are conceding a principle.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What is the argument? I do not see that it would matter very much if America relieved the whole of the places.

SIR JOHN BEALE: If that is accepted—I do not know.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Let us think it out for a moment. Take Poland, which is probably the most contentious of all these countries, or one of them. Supposing America relieves Poland and thereby acquires great merit in Poland, and great influence.

SIR JOHN BEALE: Or great demerit. Their idea of relief may be less than other countries.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Take the two cases. If America gets great merit, how does that harm us or anybody else? She is not going to try and exercise any political influence in Poland; she would be insane to wish to do such a thing. If she is not, I do not see that it matters. She gets a number of headlines in the "Daily Mail," but that does not matter.

SIR JOHN BEALE: I hope that is the true view, because it will make life easier for this country. My own view is that probably you will find that you could not do it, as a British nation, for there you have no further influence.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Our attitude could easily be this to say to America, "We think you will make a mess of this, but if you insist on doing this alone, do it alone; only if you are going to do it alone, it must be alone; we will not be formally responsible unless we are really responsible; if you choose to take these things out of our hands and do them by yourself, very well, you must go on and do it, but it must be clear that you are doing it."

SIR JOHN BEALE: That is a position which would be difficult to maintain.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then it would break down. Then, if the Americans come to us and say "We cannot do it," then we can say "You must come into our scheme."

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LORD CURZON: Meanwhile, we have to give an answer. I think the question is this. If you turn to the French you know what will happen. They will say "Very well, in so far as you are dealing with Armenia from the Southern side we are vitally interested," and they will be only too happy to say "By all means, come along and do it through us." But time will be wasted. Meanwhile, we have General Clayton's telegram* saying that there are 40,000 Armenians, and that 17,000 are destitute.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Those are at Aleppo?

LORD CURZON: Yes. The French may say, "That is our interest, come along and join with us there; that concerns us." The French may say, "In the North we have nothing to do with it," and they have nothing whatever to do with it; and I should be most reluctant, unless we decided upon the policy of France being the mandatory Power for all the Caucasus in the future, to admit that the French had a decisive right to say what should be done from the Northern side.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, not a decisive right. We could scarcely say to the Americans, "We will let you go through the Dardanelles," and the rest of it, without consulting the French at all.

LORD CURZON: That is as regards the Dardanelles. Is it not really the right thing to say that we must consult our Allies about sending through the Dardanelles? but when it comes to Armenia, in the North, we should say to America, "We shall be only too happy to join you, that is a matter in which we are concerned equally with yourselves," but in the South, "Consult the French."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should have thought the better plan would have been to have said, "As far as we are concerned, go ahead, we do not propose to interfere. This is a charitable undertaking and nothing to do with politics at all. You wish to feed the Armenians as they are starving; very well, go and feed them. But we ought to tell you that the French have great interests there, and we admit they have them in the South, and probably before you do anything there you had better consult them, but that is a matter for you."

SIR LOUIS MALLET: They have great interests in the North, the railway, and so on.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: In the North as well?

LORD CURZON: Are you going, by this reference of the Americans to the French, tacitly to admit ——

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should not say anything about the interests of France on the North in Armenia.

LORD CURZON: I think America will recognise that it would be difficult for us to say, without consulting the French at all, that they can go through the Dardanelles, and all the rest of it. The Straits are in Allied occupation, and therefore no doubt America will think it desirable to consult the French. As to the South, the French have got interests in Alexandretta, and so on. We cannot dispute that, after the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In that case also we think the French should be consulted.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should say, "As far as we are concerned we are quite willing, and very likely you will think it desirable to consult the French."

LORD CURZON: Do you not think we ought to associate ourselves with the enquiry in some shape or another?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think so.

LORD CURZON: With the Armenians?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think I should bother about it. We certainly would do anything we could to assist.

LORD CURZON: That means the whole thing would be out of our hands. The Americans bring in the French, so clearly the French should be consulted, and the Americans should be told that the French have interests there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, I should not tell them that. I should say they would probably think it desirable to consult the French.

* E.C. 2451.

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LORD CURZON: There are two points. They should consult the French in regard to the Dardanelles—that is an international question—and they should consult the French with regard to the Levant.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Even there I should think it would be very rude to do anything there without admitting the French had any rights; they have such interests in Turkey. But apart from that, I should suggest to the Americans, as our forces have occupied Aleppo——

GENERAL SMUTS: Perhaps that is the reason why they are asking us, but they have as much reason to ask the French, too.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And we think they have.

GENERAL SMUTS: They are probably consulting the French and making that suggestion.

LORD CURZON: I want to get the thing started, and I do not want to get it tied up by the French immediately treating this as a political move, which I am afraid they will do.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If you did it without consulting the French, they are more likely ——

LORD CURZON: I am in favour of taking some part in it ourselves and adopting Admiral Webb's suggestion.

GENERAL SMUTS: We are taking independent action through General Allenby, where we should not consult the French at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Are we in military occupation there?

SIR JOHN BEALE: We have a fund which is anxious to despatch personnel there.

GENERAL SMUTS: They have done nothing, and we should set them going. It is only General Allenby, so far, and he complains that the Armenian fund has done nothing.

SIR JOHN BEALE: It should be encouraged to send people there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If the Americans say, "We want to go to Aleppo," they would require General Allenby's leave, of course.

LORD CURZON: I am anxious not to say anything to the Americans which will give them the idea that we think the French are the only great European Power who has an interest in Armenia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I did not contemplate that at all. I suggest that we should say, in answer to their enquiry, "We have no objection, but we probably think it desirable you should consult the French." That is all.

SIR JOHN BEALE: Are we to encourage the Armenian fund to go there too?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, certainly.

SIR JOHN BEALE: If they go there they will require shipping from us. It would be an inefficient body. There are two or three people proposing to arrive overland to start with, and I am afraid there will only be friction.

MR. MONTAGU: Why do you want your own people there?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They want to do something. They would be aggrieved if we said they were not to do anything, and we allowed the Americans to do it.

MR. MONTAGU: You have not a plethora of food; you surely do not want to double the machinery.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should not let them take food. I thought they wanted to be the personnel.

SIR JOHN BEALE: They desire to go, and, when they get there, if they can import food they will.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: As far as available, but we do not think there will be any for them.

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MR. MONTAGU: Then that is quite satisfactory.

SIR JOHN BEALE: Does not this give us an opportunity of asking the Americans what Mr. Hoover's plan is?

GENERAL SMUTS: No.

SIR JOHN BEALE: We have no Ambassador here whom we can ask.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should not do that in connection with this matter. This question of Armenian relief is one which excites a great deal of feeling.

SIR JOHN BEALE: It struck me that if we were acceding to their request, it would be a good opportunity to put in a word without exciting feeling.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Not with reference to this. I agree in general that we ought to take the Mission, because they have said that it is a part of Mr. Hoover's general plan. That does, perhaps, open the door. Which telegram is that?

SIR JOHN BEALE: It is No. 1454,* the one sent round with the Foreign Office note.

GENERAL SMUTS: I think we ought to send food.

SIR JOHN BEALE: I have seen a paragraph in the papers, saying that a convoy of several ships has started, and I believe it has sailed. I do not think they are delaying it.

GENERAL SMUTS: The Hoover question and the food organisation ought to be dealt with on a different basis. It should not be raised in connection with Armenian relief.

SIR JOHN BEALE: It is part of the scheme. If you accept it as part of the scheme——

GENERAL SMUTS: We do not say that. We say we raise no objection to this purely philanthropic proposal.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Meanwhile General Clayton wants money.

GENERAL SMUTS: Yes, for purposes of relief.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We ought to let anyone who wishes to do it send money, and we ought to send some ourselves.

LORD CURZON: Are not these the conclusions of the Committee? I will summarise them in the most colloquial language. We say to the Americans, "Go ahead!"

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Secondly, "Of course, you will consult the French."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Thirdly, "We will give you every assistance in our power."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "And we will, on the lines agreed upon between Webb and Gates, attach British officers to your Missions to help them, if they are so required."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Fourthly, "On the Southern side, our Armenian Fund will do what it can to back up your efforts, by independent action."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Fifthly, "We do not raise the general question of food supplies referred to in the telegram, but we treat this as an exception."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like to have that before me.

LORD CURZON: It is the note* of the 21st November, and has been circulated.

GENERAL SMUTS: "Mr. Lansing adds that the foregoing plan enjoys the complete approval of the Government of the United States, and is part of Mr. Hoover's food scheme." That is information for us.

* E.C. 2540.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: "And he instructs Mr. Laughlin to enquire if any objection exists on the part of His Majesty's authorities to the proposed action by the Committee." That means, you say, there is no objection.

LORD CURZON: We thank you very much for attending, Sir John Beale.

(*Sir John Beale withdrew.*)

GENERAL THWAITES: There is the point of supply from the South. General Allenby finds it difficult to supply his own troops North of the railway.

LORD CURZON: From the South, I mean; the Armenian Relief Fund in this country should be urged to put its back into it and send out.

GENERAL THWAITES: It is a question of communication.

LORD CURZON: Supplies could be sent by sea.

GENERAL THWAITES: At the present moment General Allenby has stated that he finds it extremely difficult to feed his own troops.

LORD CURZON: I have no doubt that General Allenby is doing all he can. We will send out at once, and we really ought to be most active.

The question of American action with regard to Armenian relief is only a secondary one really, and we are here mainly to prepare our case with regard to the Peace Conference. It really was with that object that I made the statement I did. I suppose we ought really to form some idea in our own minds—that is our function—first, as to whether we do favour the idea of France as against America, or America, as against France, becoming the mandatory of the Powers for the constitution of an Armenian State of the future; and secondly, what are our ideas as to the kind of Armenian State for which we ought to work.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I say a word about that. You said, I thought with perfect truth, that it would be very difficult to have a different mandatory State dealing with Armenia and the new Caucasus Republics, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Daghestan. If that is so, the proposition really is whether France or America should deal with the district south of the Caucasus, running along and including the six Armenian vilayets between the three seas. You have only to state that to be perfectly certain that the Americans will not take it on. They are never going to have anything to do with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan. Conceivably they might be induced to take up Armenia, because of the sentimental interest that exists with regard to it, but they certainly would not take up anything else. I do not think myself, from our point of view, it really matters two straws, or that it could be said it would be disadvantageous to have America there. Then the question is really whether there is any reason why we should not give to France the whole of that district. First, as to the question whether we favour a large or small Armenia. The figures that have been given to me—I do not know that they are trustworthy—state that in the six vilayets of Armenia before the war the population was 35 per cent. Armenian, 25 per cent. Turk, and 20 per cent. Kurd, and some extra minor populations, Christian and Pagan, of about 20 per cent. That shows, what I suppose is true, that before the war, throughout the six vilayets, the Armenians were the most numerous body, although probably not in a majority in any district, or, at any rate, in very few districts. That is the generally accepted view. It is probably true, I should think, that by now they are not even the most numerous body in that district. Still, there is a very great objection to allowing a change to take place in the political complexion of the country because of the massacres of the Turks. Therefore, I confess I am rather inclined to favour a large Armenia. Historically, there is a good deal to be said for it. Then, what else are you going to do if you do not do that? Are you going to give back a portion of Armenia to the Turks? That would be a most objectionable thing to do, surely, as a result of their massacres; and what portion of it, because the Armenians are scattered all over it. You would have to remove the Armenians from the north to the south, which is Commander Hogarth's plan, and then give the north part back to the Turks. That is objectionable from every point of view if it can be avoided, partly on the grounds which I have given, and partly also that you would enable the Turks to have a direct connection between Anatolia and the Turkish population in the Caucasus, which is exactly what we wish to avoid, so far as Pan-Turanianism is concerned. We want to get a barrier across from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, if it can be done reasonably. Therefore, I myself am in favour of a large Armenia. That is merely on its merits.

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LORD CURZON: You will remember this, in passing. You have been talking about a large Armenia as if it were identical with the six vilayets. Of course, it is not. The large Armenia is much bigger than the six vilayets, and Trebizond was never one of the vilayets; it is a Turkish port and part of Turkish territory. The large Armenia you are contemplating, therefore, involves giving Armenia Lazistan, the port of which is Trebizond, the principal port at the eastern end of the Black Sea. That involves giving to Armenia a district in which Armenians are in a great minority.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree it would be impossible to do it if you did not have some European country to look after it. I do not think that it is arguable. Nor am I sure that it would work, even so. On the other hand, I do not see anything which would be much better. If you give Trebizond back to the Turks, you put the Armenians under the Turks there. That seems to me to be the objection. On the whole, I do not see anything much better than making a large Armenia. From our point of view it would be a great convenience if we could, without injury to ourselves, offer to the French a great extension of their blue area in a north-easterly direction, including Armenia, which, for what they are worth, would include Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan; that would be a substantial offer to her. Then you would have to have some special treatment as to Baku.

LORD CURZON: We are coming to that later. I have some ideas to put forward with regard to the Caucasus region.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Whatever you do about it, there is that enormous difficulty. I do not see at present how we shall be able to argue it when we sit down at the Conference. Supposing we got a Conference with the Americans, Italians, and the French, and the French say, "We will begin the Conference by saying, here is our Agreement," then we shall not be able to say anything against that. We shall have to sit quite quiet, so far as I can see.

LORD CURZON: We are getting back to that wretched Agreement again. Cannot we take the line at the Peace Conference that these Agreements have necessarily lapsed?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, not as between us and the French. They are not binding on the Conference, but I think they are binding on us.

LORD CURZON: You always take a very strong and stiff view about that, and I am afraid I cannot agree with it.

GENERAL SMUTS: Shall we deal with the Caucasus before we decide about Armenia?

MR. MONTAGU: Shall we take Kurdistan and Azerbaijan before we decide on anything else?

LORD CURZON: I do not want to take Kurdistan at all to-day.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Shall we take Azerbaijan and Georgia before we deal with Armenia?

LORD CURZON: Yes, if you like. The case about the Caucasus is this. Before the war, the regions on both sides of the Caucasian range were in the hands of the Russians. Whether they were of Russian or non-Russian nationality, we know that Russia had taken the best part of a century to conquer some of them. She had to maintain a great force to keep them in order. I have been at Tiflis two or three times myself, and other people in this room have been there also, and the whole organisation was one of great military strength, under a Viceroy. When the disruption of Russia took place the Caucasus broke away, and there was for a short time a futile and rather foolish experiment of a Trans-Caucasian Federal Government, the centre of which was at Tiflis. We did our best to support that movement. We sent money there, we sent officers there. The thing had no germs of stability in it, because we were really trying to fuse into a single whole races and creeds fundamentally opposed to each other, the Armenians, the Tatars, and the Russians. The experiment of a Trans-Caucasian Federal Government at Tiflis broke down irretrievably in May 1918. Since then there have been in existence these four States which are depicted in Sir Eyre Crowe's map.* I should like to say, before we come to the question of those States, that this matter is one of very great importance to ourselves. It is not a matter really of the rival ambitions of a number of turbulent tribes existing in the mountains. The whole

* E.C. 2525.

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experience of the war has taught us the supreme importance of this region, with a view to the countries further east, over which it is essential, in the interest of India and our Empire, that we should exercise some measure of political control. A hostile force in possession of this region of the Caucasus would turn the flank of the British position in Asia, as it very nearly did in Persia and Trans-Caspia in the course of the past six months. Further, anybody can easily see how a state of chronic disorder among the people in this area, many of whom are hereditary enemies, would immediately turn the Caucasus into an Asiatic Balkans threatening the peace of that part of the world, as the similar jealousies and ambitions of the Balkans have done in the eastern part of Europe. Any sort of anarchy, disorder, or Bolshevism there must inevitably react upon our whole position in Persia and the countries lying to the east of Persia. There is the further question of the great commercial and material interests in that part of the world. Now that the Dardanelles are open and the Black Sea is accessible, Batum must in the future become the great commercial port of Persia. Hitherto we have only precariously forced our way into Persia with our goods from the roadsteads that exist in the Persian Gulf, and by the overland route—which has been closed for long—from Trezibond. Once you have the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Black Sea open, with the main line of railway across the Caucasus, the commercial importance of Batum, which has been the port of export for oil, will be enormously increased, and it will become the emporium for the central parts of Asia. Therefore we are vitally interested in Batum.

Then, as regards Baku, Lord Robert Cecil let fall a remark with which I agree, that Baku is of great international interest. It is impossible to allow the great oil resources of Baku to fall into the hands of a tiny little mountain Republic like Daghestan, or into the hands of a very doubtful element like Turkish Azerbaijan. It *is* a great international interest. The city itself is a cosmopolitan city; I have never seen one more so in the world; it is the centre of a good many of the scoundrels of mankind, and recent events have shown how hopelessly divided the population is. The idea that the Tatars, the Armenians, or the Bolsheviks, or any other party could permanently hold Baku and control the vast resources there, is one that cannot be entertained for a moment. Therefore it is essential to us, looking at it from our point of view, that some form of order and government should ultimately emerge in the Caucasian regions.

Look for a moment at the States that are involved. The westernmost is Georgia. Georgia, quite apart from its history, is the most highly developed, progressive, and cultured of these States. It has an independent history and moral force of its own. The history of Georgia in the last few years has been dramatic and varied. It formed for a short time a part of the Trans-Caucasian Federation, the headquarters of which were Tiflis, and to which I referred just now. When that Federation broke down, Georgia declared its own independence, but, in its desire to fortify its own rather feeble powers, it made terms both with the Turks and the Germans. To the Turks it ceded the Mohammedan areas around Batum, when that place was handed back to Turkey by the Bolsheviks, and it entered into close relations with Germany. The German object in getting hold of Georgia was two-fold. First, it was in order to get the manhood of the Georgian people, who are the best fighting soldiers in the Caucasus; secondly, it was in order to obtain control of the great manganese deposits which are found in that part of the world. Therefore, you have Georgia, at the present moment, the most respectable of these States, the most entitled to independence, the one which we should most certainly back, and to which our first duty should be to free it from its own feebleness and the shackles which it has imposed upon itself. On the other hand, the question of Georgia is complicated by the fact that Batum is the main port of Georgia, and upon the international importance of that I have already laid stress. Another point is that Tiflis, the capital of the Caucasus, is not merely the capital of Georgia, but the capital of the whole region of the Caucasus. I think our general policy should be—and this is the line taken by the Foreign Office—to encourage the independence of Georgia by every means in our power.

I will next say a word or two about Daghestan, the little mountain State on the west coast of the Caspian Sea, stretching from the eastern boundaries on the north side of the Caucasus. This little State is inhabited by mountaineers; they were conquered with great difficulty by Russia; they are Moslems and not Christian in creed, and their importance consists in the fact that their territory gives them control of Petrovsk, from whence the line of railway runs to the oil wells of Grozny; Derbend, which is one of the few ports on the west coast of the Caspian Sea; and the coast running down to the immediate proximity of Baku. All reasons, geographical, racial, and so on, tend to throw Daghestan into the orbit of Russia rather than that of the Caucasus; but just as

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Russia fought long to overcome Daghestan, so she would probably have to fight long—if she ever recovers—in order to get it back. For the moment, the Republic of Daghestan has an independent though not a very secure existence.

Then on the southern side you have the little province of which I spoke, Russian Armenia, with its capital at Erivan. I do not propose to say anything about that, because whatever is the fate of large Armenia it will carry with it the fate of the smaller, and the Russian Armenians will either remain where they are or will gravitate westwards to join their brethren. In any case, I imagine that Russian Armenia will form a part of the larger Armenia which it is proposed to create.

The really embarrassing factor of this problem is Azerbaijan, whether you call it Turkish Azerbaijan, because it is inhabited by Turks or Tatars, or Russian Azerbaijan, because it belonged until recently to the Russian Empire. This includes Baku and Elizabethpol. These are the two principal cities. The difficulty about the Government of Azerbaijan at the moment is this, that it is violently pro-Turk, violently anti-Armenian, violently anti-Persian,—in fact, it is everything we do not want it to be. The Government is in the hands of the Tatar land-owners, who hate the Armenians with a deadly hatred, hate the Bolsheviks equally well, and who, for racial and selfish reasons, incline towards the Turks. The aspirations of this small State of Azerbaijan are for recognition, which we have never yet given, and for expansion to the South. They want to join themselves with their brethren across the border in Persia, and to make a Turkish State in that part of the world. Now what are our desires with regard to Azerbaijan, both north and south of the Persian frontier? That problem is one of the most acute that we have to deal with, because while I imagine on general grounds we should welcome the constitution of some sort of State there, provided it were not a menace to ourselves, the only form that State seems likely to assume in the near future is one which we could not look upon with any satisfaction.

These are the four States creeping into existence in that part of the world. What is to be their future? A great deal turns upon whether we are to contemplate that at any time in the future they will go back to Russia or not. Russia has spent millions of money and 60 or 70 years of fighting in order to get them. Will she abandon that quest altogether? Is it possible that a reconstituted Russia of the future will once again get the Caucusus under her sway? I cannot answer that question; and in all probability what we ought to do, without forming any opinion upon it at all, is to refrain from taking any step that would prevent a resuscitated Russia from resuming her connection with that part of the world. But for the time being it is clear, from all the information we have, that these rising Republics are furiously anti-Russian and furiously anti-Bolshevik, and we ought to do nothing whatever to lead them to suppose that we are ignoring their claims to independence in favour of a possible revival of Russia in the future.

The second question is, are we to recognise them? Upon that, no doubt, the Foreign Office will advise us. With regard to Georgia the answer seems to be inevitably in the affirmative; with regard to Daghestan, probably; with regard to Russian Armenia I speak with hesitation, and, indeed, it is not necessary to give an answer, because it is part of the larger question. As to Azerbaijan, under the circumstances it is most difficult to say yes. On the other hand, it is not easy to say no. Out of this welter can we evolve anything in the way of a policy for ourselves at the Peace Conference? I suppose it must take two lines. As to the tutelary Power of which we were speaking just now, Lord Robert Cecil was telling us that he looked upon it as out of the question that the Americans would undertake this burden. If that is so, the French remain. The strongest argument in favour of bringing the French into it is that it fits in with our Syrian policy; we want to divert the energies of France away from the Lebanon and Arabia. First, will the French assume responsibilities in the Caucasus? Secondly, are they the best people to do it? Thirdly, is it to our interest to set up a powerful French State or authority in that part of the world?

Those are questions I do not attempt to answer; but it does occur to me that, whatever may be settled about the tutelary Power, our interest, and, indeed, the interest of everyone concerned in this region, compels us to take steps quite apart from the question of the recognition of this or that State. I have spoken of the importance of Batum at one end of the line and Baku at the other. I should think this Committee will probably agree that, whatever happens, Batum must be made a free port. It was a free port, under the Treaty of Berlin, until it was shamelessly annexed by Russia contrary to the provisions of that Act. I imagine, too, that we ought to ensure complete control of the railway from Batum to Baku. I imagine that Baku ought to be internationalised and put under some form of government more secure than any of the States

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round about it. Is it possible to create some form of temporary international control in this region pending the assumption by France of these larger responsibilities, which she may or may not assume—I doubt myself if she will——

GENERAL SMUTS: France or America?

LORD CURZON: Pending that, we have to look to peace and order in that country. Is it not desirable to contemplate a temporary occupation there which might even take the form in most circumstances thoroughly to be deprecated—of international control? I see that General Thomson, at Baku, in one of his telegrams,* says that it would be essential to have an Allied gendarmerie on this line. I suggest to the Committee—I do not think it appears in any of the papers put forward—that we should contemplate for the time being an Allied occupation of this country, an Allied occupation which might be undertaken by ourselves, the French, and the Americans, or in the last resort by ourselves alone, which would involve the holding of Batum, Tiflis, and Baku, the policing of the line, the control of railways, telegraphs, and so on, and, in fact, the giving of some kind of backbone and stability which will enable these rather rudimentary States, on either side of the line, to make their way into existence. I merely throw that out as a suggestion, because whether America or France ultimately takes it up there must be an interval before they can do so, and in that interval everything is tottering. You want the presence of some Power to keep order now, and you want to secure in the future that there shall be a free way from the Black Sea to the Caspian. These are the ideas that I have formed in my own mind, from reading the papers with regard to the Caucasus which have been circulated.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should have thought that there would have been great difficulty about an Allied occupation. I believe we have sent two divisions to Batum.

GENERAL THWAITES: One division has been ordered to go and another one is held in readiness to go. It is a question of shipping.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. I doubt very much whether the French would agree to send troops there at the present time. The only way in which you can get the French to take an interest in the place is to hand it over to them. You have to consider the political situation here, and I am rather afraid of our being entangled in any considerable military commitments in the Caucasus. I do not think that would be at all well received.

LORD CURZON: I must have expressed myself badly. I meant that there should be some temporary Government set up at Tiflis, with some force (which should not be a large force) to control the railway from Batum to Baku. It would be necessary to hold Batum, but in any case we must hold Baku.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: I have a paper on the subject by Mr. Stevens, our consul at Batum.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Apparently he talks of 60,000 men as the minimum necessary for dealing with the whole question—that is, the three States, is it not?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Does he want to call the new States into existence?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: He shares your view and says that 60,000 men should be provided, 20,000 by each of three Powers.

MR. MONTAGU: What is the point of it all? Why do we want to take any responsibility? It is right that we should want to, but is it necessary?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am rather disposed to agree with you. My own view is that we should hold Baku because of the immense value of the oil deposits.

MR. MONTAGU: Yes. We have agreed, as a temporary measure, to hold the Batum–Baku Railway; we are doing it, and preventing any disturbance to the south of that. I should have thought that we should remain there until the French, or whoever it is that is to take possession of the country, does so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: As to "taking possession," we must be careful. I do not in the least contemplate that any European Power will be able to take possession of these Caucasus districts, nor do I think it at all desirable. They would be perfectly insane to do it. The Russians had 150,000 men there to hold it. That could not be

* E.C. 2527.

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done, but I do think that Georgia particularly, and Daghestan also, from a totally different point of view, will have their independent life. The Daghestanis will spend their time in shooting and robbing one another, but that is what they like. The only thing is, when you say "make it a French sphere," that means that we are pledged by our joint declaration to establish native States in all these districts—we and the French—the only point being that in the French sphere, if the native Government asks for a European Adviser, as between us and the French, the French are to send him and not us.

LORD CURZON: That is the Sykes-Picot Agreement. It has no relation to the Caucasus.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No. But that is all you would contemplate doing with regard to the Caucasus.

MR. MONTAGU: When Lord Curzon was talking about Armenia he argued, and I thought very forcibly, that you could not expect anyone to look after Armenia unless they had the Caucasus as well. For the reasons that Lord Robert Cecil gave, from the anti-Pan-Turanian point of view, it seems to me very desirable we should go for a large Armenia; and when we discuss the larger Armenia, not only does it seem to me difficult to get the Americans to undertake it, but also that the French, with their Black Sea base, the railway, and their powers to build railways through to all these points, Trebizond and so on, are the natural Power to undertake it. Supposing you agree on the first point we were discussing, that you get a larger Armenia, and that it should be in the French sphere, and if you agree that whoever has Armenia as a sphere must also have the Caucasus, do you not settle the question of Azerbaijan?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am disposed to think so. That is the way my own mind moves.

LORD CURZON: What do you mean by "settle" it? It all depends upon that. What I am looking to is this. Unless there is somebody there with prestige and power to keep order, at any rate for the time being, the peoples of these States will not only be killing each other within the limit of their States, but will be fighting each other outside and making absolute confusion there. It is not to be supposed for a moment that Georgia, Daghestan, and Turkish Azerbaijan will agree together. Whenever they have been thrown together they have fought each other. They have even fought in the streets of Baku. Pending the taking over by France or some other Power, you have an interval in which you will have to guarantee the security of these regions.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not agree with that.

LORD CURZON: You have it already. The British are there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree that we should secure the Baku Railway and the ports at the end of it. We have sent a division to Batum to do that. We do not want to do any more for the moment.

LORD CURZON: That is the whole thing. The railway is the spinal cord of the country, and you have to hold Tiflis in the middle. There is the difficulty. Batum is in Georgia. Tiflis is the capital of Georgia and Baku is in Turkish Azerbaijan.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That makes it easier. You say we are there for the purpose merely of holding the railway. We must do that because it is essential to us, because it is on the road to India. It has nothing to do with the general political atmosphere.

LORD CURZON: You must look at the future too. Now that we have reopened the line we must keep it open.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "From the Black Sea to the Caspian."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We shall have to do that as long as our troops are there. If we can get the French sent there so much the better.

MR. MONTAGU: It is a very rich country, is it not?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

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MR. MONTAGU: Would that not be an inducement to the most commercially minded nation in the world?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is, no doubt, tremendous mineral wealth in Georgia, according to the maps I have seen.

GENERAL SMUTS: My feeling is this, speaking from the point of view of the whole question generally, what is the policy we ought to pursue? It is difficult to settle all these questions here and now by clear-cut decisions. The general question of policy troubles me; what line are we to pursue at the Peace Conference? Our line of policy should be, if possible, to work with America. The Sykes-Picot Agreement is unfortunately a millstone round our necks, and we must try and get out of it. In the second place, with Germany practically wiped off for a generation, we must deal with France. France is a great military Power. We know the character of French policy in the past, and what it may be in the coming generation again. France may be our great problem, and therefore it seems to me that we must try and make friends with America. That is the line of policy for us to pursue. Can you do that? America has no selfish objects at this juncture; America is not out for anything except for the larger issue of world settlement, depending upon the League of Nations. It seems to me that if we meet America at that point, upon the League of Nations, we should probably carry America with us in arguments that we could not possibly use with the French. America could put her foot down and make it impossible for the French to take a certain line of action at the Conference; we should back America, and in the end we probably could move out of the impossible position into which we have got. Applying that general argument to the problem before us, I would say this. We have the problem of two Empires that have disappeared, Russia and Turkey. Austria, we are not concerned with. We are concerned with the remains of two Empires that have disappeared. You do not want to divide the loot; that would be a wrong policy for the future. You must make some arrangement which will conserve the peace of the world in the future, and give some form of decent government for these countries. It seems to me the League of Nations, or the organisation that we call the League of Nations, the Council of the League of Nations, should become the titular reversionary for these Empires. If there is to be any title in the future, any supreme authority, any supreme control in the future in respect of these countries that have fallen off from Russia and Turkey, it should be the League of Nations, and they should combine the principles of autonomy and self-determination.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You mean a League of Nations acting through some mandatory?

GENERAL SMUTS: Yes, it would be in the background, with its Council meeting from time to time, settling general questions of policy, and seeing the peace is kept.

LORD CURZON: You would not apply that to Mesopotamia, which we were discussing the other day?

GENERAL SMUTS: Even that might be done. Then the thing would work out like this. The League of Nations, for the larger purpose, would step into the shoes of the old Turkish and Russian Empires. These peoples, so far as they are of any vitality, would become little autonomous States. That would apply to Daghestan, to Georgia, and to Azerbaijan too. I am not sure, but I will assume that. It would not apply to Armenia, but it would apply to the others. They would become autonomous States, and nominally at the disposal of the League of Nations for the larger purpose. International control, we all assume, is impossible. That has never worked and never will. It simply leads to the greatest confusion and friction, and it becomes a source of danger, because it sets the great nations quarrelling with each other. Therefore, it seems to me, that some particular Power belonging to the League of Nations should be indicated as the tutelary Power, the guardian Power, in respect of one or other of these States. The result would be, supposing America were to undertake this job, America would keep a large general control over Georgia, but not in her own right, she would do it under a general act of mandate which would be settled by the Council of the League of Nations, and revised from time to time, and shaped in such a way that the general supervision which America exercises over Georgia would be in the general interest not only of Georgia, but of the world as a whole. The question is, how is that tutelary Power to be indicated? In certain cases it should undoubtedly be left to the autonomous States. It could be left to Georgia to answer

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the question, "Whom do you want to be your friend to look after you?" Perhaps the the same might be done in other cases. In Armenia, when the population has settled down, I think probably the Conference would have to indicate who should be the tutelary Power.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think I ought to say this. Colonel Lawrence is back from France, and he tells me that he gathers the French Armenians are very keen for France to take over Armenia.

GENERAL SMUTS: Those are people living in Paris. It may be that is the solution. It may be that Lord Robert Cecil is right, and that to get out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement we may have to project France to the North and get her out of the South. I must frankly admit, from the point of view of the future, I do not look upon that with great pleasure, because there is no doubt this is one of the great roads through Asia. We have been rudely awakened by the dangers of this route through Asia from the Black Sea to the Caspian.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree it is a vital question, and one which ought to be discussed.

GENERAL SMUTS: I should not like to see a great European Power there; I would rather see America there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would rather see America there, certainly. The difficulty is, what are you to do with the French?

GENERAL SMUTS: I am rather for playing up to America, and moving her on to back us up. Even if she is beaten, she will be our friend and stand by us.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The difficulty will be to get her as a starter at all.

GENERAL SMUTS: I do not know as to that. We have heard the argument about the copper mines, relief, and so on. Lord Curzon has asked about Mesopotamia. I am not sure if it is not going to be a solution of Mesopotamia either. Supposing we are going to establish an Arab State, to which we are pledged; we have quite frankly, sincerely, and honestly said that we are not going to annex the country, and we do not want the country. The country wants a helping hand, and some Power must give a helping hand there. That Power is ourselves. Is not the natural solution that there should be this Arab State, or States, and that these Arab States should indicate us as their friends? We are told that in the consultations now taking place they are going to indicate us as their friends. We say we are prepared to put out a friendly hand here, to be the tutelary Power; we do not do it in our own right. We are willing to do that, and we are prepared to do it without any reference to a League of Nations. The result will be that the relics of the Turkish and Russian Empires are settled in this way, on the lines of a large policy, and there is no annexation by anybody. Certain Powers are indicated to look after certain areas, and these Powers are indicated, wherever possible, by the populations themselves. Where they cannot do it, as in the case of Armenia, the population is poor, and, in fact, I do not think there is any population, the Conference must deal with it. It is the same with Palestine; like Armenia, the population will not indicate anybody in particular. The population is so mixed.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am afraid I must go now, but may I say a word before I leave ——?

LORD CURZON: We can resume the discussion on another day, if you like.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: —about the great military Power which has been mentioned, as to which I quite agree. This region is part of the route to India, and a great Asiatic thoroughfare, and for some things it would be better to have the Americans there than the French. If the Americans are there, they are not there permanently. They will never hold it permanently, and then, whenever the Russians may recover, they may come down there. The Russians are much more formidable to us than the French. The French cannot get at these places at all except by sea. As far as we can see, they will never be able to do anything in the military sense in these places, miles away from their base; but if the Russians come, they could and would be a very formidable Power there.

GENERAL SMUTS: I agree with what Lord Curzon has said; we should keep all these things in a sort of suspense account.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: Of course, the French would be a formidable rival.

LORD CURZON: I must say that I am very much alarmed at the idea of the French being there. If you have France there, with a control which will extend from the eastern corner of the Mediterranean right across to the Caspian, our position will be very assailable in the East. Trouble in Persia means trouble in Afghanistan, and then you are brought right up to the borders of India.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We must have somebody there. If you put the French there you will exclude the Russians; then, if you put the Americans there they will never hold it; they may come in, in a moment of enthusiasm, in order to keep up the idea of a League of Nations, and in order to help Armenia, but they will never be there permanently, they cannot.

(*Lord Robert Cecil withdrew.*)

MR. MONTAGU: May I ask General Smuts a question with regard to the League of Nations and applying it to Mesopotamia; would he apply it to Persia also?

GENERAL SMUTS: Yes, to Persia, undoubtedly. I think it might be a good solution. My point is to try and get America on to our side. President Wilson is fighting for a League of Nations. If he can go back from the Peace Conference with this point in his favour, that he has secured the League of Nations as a practical part of a world-system, he will go a long way to meet us on particular points and help our programme again, and really our programme is an unselfish one. I would try, therefore, to get America into European politics; it is no use her sitting outside. Let her undertake the burden and let her feel the responsibility.

LORD CURZON: The authorities of the India Office have been looking at it from their point of view, and I should like to hear what they have to say.

GENERAL COX: I think we should be sorry to see any great Power in that part of the country which would threaten us again in the same way as Russia has in the past. I think it is important from a military point of view. We have been through some bad times in the last six months, and we do not want them repeated.

LORD CURZON: I feel that strongly. A good deal of my public life has been spent in connection with the political ambitions of France, which I have come across in Tunis, in Siam, and in almost every distant region where the French have sway. We have been brought, for reasons of national safety, into an alliance with the French, which I hope will last, but their national character is different from ours, and their political interests collide with our own in many cases. I am seriously afraid that the great Power from whom we may have most to fear in the future is France, and I almost shudder at the possibility of putting France in such a position. She is powerful in almost all parts of the world, even around India. Are we to place her in a position to control this railway from Batum to Baku? Batum is one of the main approaches to India. France is a highly organised State, has boundless intrepidity, imagination, and a certain power of dealing with Eastern peoples; and the idea that she would sit quietly there simply for the purpose of allowing Azerbaijan and the other States to constitute themselves a strong people is out of the question, for the French are born intriguers, as we have seen in the Lebanon and elsewhere. I can only say that I should be most reluctant to lend a hand to a scheme which would place France in a position of political authority in this region, and that I would sooner the States fought it out among themselves, and that Russia ultimately came back.

MR. MONTAGU: Would you give Armenia to the Americans or to the French?

LORD CURZON: To the Americans, speaking for myself.

MR. MONTAGU: Of course we do not like having the French there, any more than anybody else does. Our chief fear at the moment is Pan-Turanianism, and having Mohammedan States right across. If you get a larger Armenia organised under a European Power, and Azerbaijan under a European Power, that fear will disappear. What answer do you give to Lord Robert Cecil's argument? If the Americans will not have it and you do not want the French there, you will either have the chaos you feared earlier in the afternoon, or you will have the Russian there again. The French cannot do much on that railway. Is there not something in that argument?

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The lines of communication must be by sea, they cannot cross the Alps, and we could cut their communications.

LORD CURZON: In time of war, of course we could.

COLONEL GRIBBON: Dealing with General Smuts' idea of giving America the mandate, it is not necessary to have one of the greatest Powers as the guardian of these Republics at all, because you would have the power of the League of Nations behind, whatever mandatory was put in. It would not be necessary to confine your choice to the three great Powers intimately interested in the East.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: I do not think a minor Power would have the authority or prestige of a great Power, even although she were backed up by a League of Nations.

GENERAL SMUTS: Take the case of Persia. To put a very small Power in charge of Persia would not solve the difficulty.

GENERAL COX: I was thinking of what we were discussing just now, which is a very difficult question—not Persia.

LORD CURZON: The one point we are generally agreed upon is that the future of Armenia ought to be handed over to some great Power. Opinions are divided as to whether it should be France or America. France already has claims arising out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which for certain reasons she may wish to push forward in the North, as she has done in other places further to the South. In that case it might be difficult to contest her. Some of us would sooner see America there. At the present moment there appears to be a direct plot, or, if not a plot, an organisation to bring her in, to which some of her people are a consenting party. I would not, therefore, accept the view that America will in no circumstance take it up. When we get beyond that we are in a region of doubt and of difficulty. As regards the countries in the Caucasus, we have not even arrived at a solution of the question whether we ought to recognise their independence or not. As to Georgia, we are united; as to Daghestan, it is really immaterial; as to Turkish Azerbaijan, in theory, yes, but in practice it is difficult to do anything of the sort at the moment. I imagine our general line ought to be to encourage the growth of autonomous institutions and States, and that all of us think there must be, for the time being, a continuation of military occupation. That occupation may have to assume civil responsibilities. At the two ends of the railway line there are Baku and Batum, and it may be necessary to set up international control there for a time. We are not at all united as to who should be the great Power, if any, to look after this region. We all of us feel the existence of a certain logic that will compel the Power which takes Armenia to take the Caucasus. Some of us would be very glad to see America there; others would be willing to see France there. Others, again, of whom I am one, are very much alarmed at the idea of seeing France there at all. Beyond that I do not see that we can go to-day, and really the question will depend, as General Smuts has pointed out, first, upon an agreement about the League of Nations, if arrived at; secondly, upon the degree to which each of these States is to be given the right to determine not merely its own future autonomous existence, but who should be the tutelary Power to look after it. But while we are here discussing whether it should be France or America, Georgia may say, "I will not have either": or Daghestan may say, "Sooner than be under a Western Power, I will go back to Russia"; Turkish Azerbaijan may take a similar line, and all our academic *a priori* discussions here would be thrown to the winds.

MR. MONTAGU: I do not think there is any difference of opinion, as far as I am able to judge, as to the first choice, America. It is only when the second choice comes in, whether you would prefer Russia to come back or bring in France, that any divergence appears.

LORD CURZON: I do not definitely say anything about Russia. Russia is in such a welter that I should not like to give any opinion. But I am nervous about bringing in France. Upon that I do feel strongly.

MR. MONTAGU: At least it would be clear that we should never recognise the autonomy of Turkish Azerbaijan till the Turks are out of it.

LORD CURZON: By the Turks, you mean the Turkish garrison and the Turkish officials, for the population are Turks, or Tatars, and they are a Turki-speaking people. They are also mostly Sunnis, and their natural gravitation, politically and ethnographically, is towards Turkey. We cannot get away from that. We do not want to have a

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Turkish nucleus there on the very edge of Persia. It is one of the nastiest problems of the lot, this Azerbaijan question. Does the War Office wish to say anything, from the military point of view, about the whole Caucasian question?

GENERAL THWAITES: I think the points have been covered by what the members of the Committee have said. It seems we have opened up now, from the Black Sea, a new route to India, and it is all important to us to safeguard it. It has been suggested that America should administer this part of the world, or France, but it has not been suggested that we should be there, and it seems to me the country that ought to be on this important line of communications is ourselves.

GENERAL SMUTS: But can we do it?

LORD CURZON: We are getting so much already. We are going to get the colonies in Africa; we are going to get, under some disguise or other, the whole of Mesopotamia—that seems absolutely certain. If anybody looks after Persia it must be ourselves; and really to go into the Caucasus, quite apart from whether it would be possible or not—and about the possibility I agree with General Smuts——

GENERAL THWAITES: We are going to occupy it; we have got troops *en route* now to occupy the line of communications. There are very few lines of communication in this region, and the very fact that we are occupying the railway is quite sufficient to keep the country quiet, in the region of the railway, at any rate. There are several reasons why we are going there at the present moment. First of all, with regard to the position in Trans-Caspia, it is difficult to separate Trans-Caspia from this question, because we have a line of communications which is helping us to back up General Malleson, helping us to keep command of the Caspian and maintain order in the Caucasus, and helping us to enforce the terms of the armistice, for which the Turks are showing every disrespect in the world. Once having settled ourselves on this line of communications, it would be difficult to say how soon it should be taken away, or how soon it would be desirable to have it taken away.

LORD CURZON: That is true. But it rather points to what I said in my former observations, that there will have to be some sort of military control, perhaps embracing some form of civil administration, for a time to come.

GENERAL THWAITES: Yes, by us. Then there is another consideration as regards the Americans. I do not know whether you know that the American Army is going home as quickly as it can. I do not think the Americans are going to commit themselves to any military occupation in this part of the world, far away from their own country. It is a long way away from their base. That is the one point I should like to make. I can only go back to the other matter, the importance of the new line of communications with India, which seems to me to point very much to the fact that we ought to be sitting there ourselves, and nobody else.

LORD CURZON: That will be very difficult, and I am afraid we cannot carry it further to-day. When we meet again on Thursday, I really do not think, in the circumstances, it will be any good resuming this discussion. We have pretty well covered the ground. We had better go on to Palestine and Syria.

MR. MONTAGU: Yes; I do not think we should get any further. We have still to go back to Mesopotamia at some time.

LORD CURZON: For what purpose?

MR. MONTAGU: On the question of who is to be the Amir, if we have any.

LORD CURZON: We shall have to go back to that when we get the answers to the telegrams which have been sent. Arising out of Mesopotamia, there is a question we forgot the other day. The telegram* sent out from the India Office was a telegram to Captain Wilson, at Baghdad, asking him to consult with Miss Gertrude Bell and any other specially qualified officer, to advise us as to the steps to be taken to ascertain the views of the Arabs as to whether they would like a single Arab State from Mosul in the North to the Gulf in the South, a united State; and if so, whether they would like it to be under a single head, a native head; and, thirdly, in that case, who should be the man. We left out of sight the question of the Kurds. We were talking about Mosul in its hitherto political condition as a Turkish vilayet, but we must remember that the Kurds are quite a different people from the Arabs, and while the Arabs in all these

* E.C. 2552.

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three areas—because they stretch as far north as that—might like to be under an Arab head, the Kurds might not in the least like it. Granting that this area should be created a State under the tutelage of Great Britain and under a nominal Arab head, they might like—and there is a good deal to suggest it in the telegrams—to form a Confederacy of their own, also under British protection. I wondered whether, in reply to the many telegrams we have received about Kurdistan, we ought not to send a telegram to Captain Wilson indicating to him that we want his views upon a Kurdish State too. As our telegram was drafted, it looked as if only the Arabs should be consulted.

MR. MONTAGU: I plead guilty to that. I thought the wishes of the Kurds were clear in the telegram, that they should form it under a British protectorate.

LORD CURZON: I hoped that was so, but I wondered whether it would be worth while to look into it more closely.

MR. MONTAGU: I will look out the telegrams and send them over to you.

LORD CURZON: I have written out, for your consideration, a suggestion to Captain Wilson that we want him to bear in mind. (*Handing paper to Mr. Montagu.*)

MR. MONTAGU: I think Captain Wilson has already told us, in a pretty strong telegram,* that the Kurds want a Confederacy.

LORD CURZON: Yes. I have the telegram here. But I thought our telegram rather ignored that. You might think over the point, and, if you think it necessary to send a telegram, perhaps you will draft one. I was afraid, in looking over our message the other day, that we had forgotten the Kurds.

MR. MONTAGU: There is a telegram to day, in answer to one of mine, in which I asked him as to the whereabouts and a few details of the new claimant, who is of Turkish origin, in Mosul, and he gives me the details. This man is a Sunni, but Captain Wilson does not know where he is. Then he goes on to say quite clearly that, from the enquiries he is making, opinion is being developed against anyone claiming the throne, because they are all meeting with opposition, and he hopes that we have not embarked irretrievably upon taking anyone at all.

LORD CURZON: No, we have not. Then we will take Syria and Palestine on Thursday.

2 *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 2, 1918.

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* E.C. 2630.

Note by the Secretary.—The discussion was resumed at the 43rd Meeting, when certain resolutions, which will be found incorporated in the printed Proceedings of that meeting, were adopted by the Committee.

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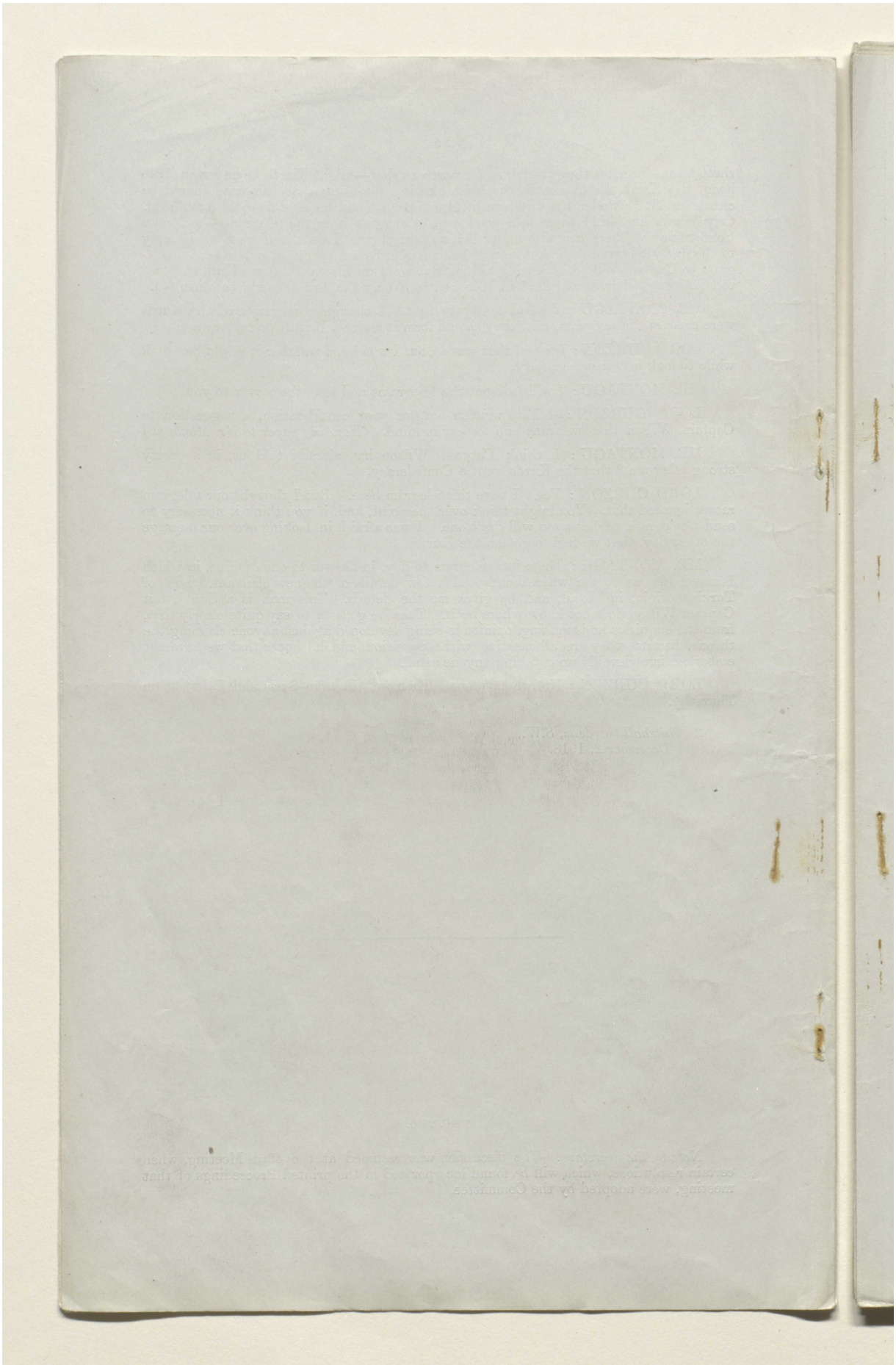

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Lord Curzon. (181)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 41st Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, December 5, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1–3).

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (for Minutes 1–3).

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff (for Minutes 1–3).

The following also attended:

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office (for Minutes 1–3).

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office (for Minutes 1–3).

SIR ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office (for Minutes 1–3).

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office (for Minutes 1–3).

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord (for Minutes 1–3).

Lieut.-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces (for Minutes 1–3).

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office (for Minutes 1–3).

Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. LAWRENCE, C.B., D.S.O. (for Minutes 1–3).

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C. (for Minutes 1–3).

Mr. R. MOWAT (for Minutes 1–3).

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury (for Minute 4).

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

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Caucasus and Armenia.

1. The Chairman said that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who had been unavoidably prevented from being present at the last meeting of the Committee when the question of the Caucasus and Armenia had been discussed with a view to the Peace Conference, wished to have an opportunity of expressing his views. He further informed the Committee that, owing to the great and urgent pressure of work thrown upon the War Cabinet clerical staff in connection with the session of the Supreme War Council held in London during the early part of the week, it had not been possible to circulate copies of the shorthand notes of the discussion of the 2nd instant, prior to the meeting. In the circumstances he suggested that it might be desirable that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff should see the shorthand notes, and that copies of General Wilson's statement should be circulated to the Committee, before the discussion was resumed.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *To adjourn the discussion until the C.I.G.S. was in possession of a copy of the shorthand notes, and until copies of his own statement had been circulated to members.*

(b.) *That General Macdonogh should furnish the Secretary, for circulation to members before the next meeting, with copies of the agreement arrived at between the British and French military authorities in December* 1917.

Syria and Palestine.

2. The Chairman made an opening statement in which he reviewed our commitments and the history of events in respect of Syria and Palestine, and concluded with suggestions as to the policy to be adopted by our representatives at the Peace Conference.

(*The text of this statement and of the subsequent discussion is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.*)

Middle Eastern Questions, with a View to the Peace Conference.

3. The Committee decided—

To reassemble on Monday, the 9th instant, at the same hour and place, in order to resume the discussion of (a) *Syria and Palestine,* (b) *Caucasus and Armenia, and to consider the case of the Hejaz and Arabia.*

Financial Aid to the Trans-Caspian Government.

4. With reference to the 38th meeting of the Committee (Minute 3 (*b*)), the Committee had before them a series of recent telegrams which had passed between the Government of India and the India Office in regard to the question of financing the Trans-Caspian Government (E.C.–2504, 2508, 2509, 2553, 2579, and 2585).

Sir A. Hirtzel said that the financial situation in Trans-Caspia had reached a critical stage, and a further decision by the Committee was urgently required. The situation was as follows. His Majesty's Government had promised a lump sum in sterling or drafts in full discharge, both of actual liabilities incurred and of any definite promises that General Malleson may have made to the Askabad Government of financial support. Malleson was at present apparently unable to state the amount of his actual liabilities, but he said that he had named no sum, and had made no promise beyond the general assurance, which he gave in August last, that as long as the Trans-Caspian Government maintained themselves we would give them military and financial aid (telegram of the 19th August,

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E.C.–1253). The Government of India had been instructed that for any purposes beyond those mentioned above, currency could only be found by dislocating our commitments in Persia, and they had been asked (*a*) if it was worth while financially to bolster up this Government; and (*b*) if so, what was the amount required? To those specific questions they had made no reply. In his telegram of the 30th November (E.C.–2585), General Malleson made two proposals on which the Government of India asked for orders urgently. One was that we should guarantee a loan by placing a sum in sterling to the credit of the Government in London, say on the 1st January, 1920. This, General Malleson thought (on the advice of Nobel's agent), would draw out the rouble notes which are being hoarded for a rise. The second proposal was one which had been previously made, viz., to collect the rouble notes against a promise to pay in silver rupees three months later. General Malleson did not state the amount which it is proposed to raise, nor whether it is for the purpose already approved by His Majesty's Government, or for the further purpose not yet approved. On the 17th November (E.C.–2426), he said that the commitments of the Askabad Government were 88 million roubles, and that they wanted to raise that sum before the end of December, and to receive a monthly subsidy of 16 million roubles from us. Five lakhs of rupees were now on their way from Quetta, and these General Malleson had been authorised to hypothecate. Baku had also sent 2 million roubles in notes. The view of the India Office, based on the latest information received, was that it was worth while to continue to offer financial support in order to prevent the Trans-Caspian Government from going to pieces. It seemed possible that if we could keep that Government going for another month or so the Bolshevist element in those regions might collapse. The view of his Department was that it was for the Committee to lay down a policy and for the Treasury to find the money.

Mr. Keynes said that, as directed by the Committee at their meeting of the 21st November, 1918, the India Office had wired asking for information (*a*) how much money was involved, and (*b*) was it worth while to continue to support a very shaky and dubious Government? To these questions no reply had been received beyond certain not very helpful suggestions as to how we should raise the money. General Malleson's new proposal was that as no roubles were obtainable for cash we should try and get them on the basis of deferred payment, which was not a proposition which offered much chance of success. It would be possible for us to pay to General Malleson a lump sum of the equivalent to 100,000*l.* sterling in krans at Meshed, but this might simply mean throwing money away. General Malleson himself said that he required not less than 1 million sterling before the end of the present month.

The Chairman thought that we might (*a*) offer the sum of 100,000*l.* sterling as a stop-gap arrangement, and (*b*) repeat our former questions and ask for definite replies. The Committee were faced with the following alternatives, either (i) to discontinue all financial support, which he did not think possible in the circumstances, or (ii) adopt the policy of the suggested loan.

General Smuts thought that, for the present at any rate, we should continue to keep the Askabad Government going in view of the alleged possibility of the Bolsheviks collapsing.

The Committee decided*—

(a.) *That the India Office should inform the Government of India that His Majesty's Government were prepared to provide at once, for General Malleson's immediate necessities, the equivalent of* 100,000*l. sterling, to be paid in krans at Meshed.*

* E.C. 2652.

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(b.) *That this promise of financial support was intended to meet immediate necessities, and must not be regarded as indicating that further support would be forthcoming.*

(c.) *That the India Office should ask for definite replies to the two questions which had already been put to the Indian Government: (i) How much money was actually involved? and (ii) Was it the considered view of the Indian Government that financial support should be continued, and, if so, for what reasons?*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 5, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, December 5, 1918, at 3 P.M.

CAUCASUS.

LORD CURZON: At our last meeting we discussed, I am sorry to say in the absence of General Wilson, the questions of Armenia and the Caucasus. I am afraid that he and the other members of the Committee have not had the advantage of seeing in type what was then said, because, owing to the great call made upon our staff in connection with the meetings of the Supreme War Council, it has not been possible to put it into shape, and, indeed, I have only just received the report myself. I understand that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, before we proceed with the business of the day, would like to say something either about Armenia or the Caucasus, so perhaps we may take his statement first, if he has one to make.

GENERAL WILSON: I understood, Sir, that at the last meeting there was some question of sending troops, other than British troops, to Batum.

LORD CURZON: It was not raised in that exact form. The suggestion was made by myself, I think, and agreed in by some of the other members of the Committee, that, whatever the future of the Caucasus, there must be at any rate a temporary military occupation of that part of the country. How long it will last, of course, it is impossible to foretell, but certainly the prospect was considered here of British troops remaining for a time in occupation of Batum, the line of railway to the Caspian, and Baku itself.

GENERAL WILSON: Quite. That was what I understood.

GENERAL SMUTS: We did discuss the possible ultimate disposal of the country, that Trans-Caucasia might go to the guardianship of some Power, but that was an ultimate possibility.

GENERAL WILSON: Partly that, and partly a paper by Sir Eyre Crowe, in which he eliminates everybody except the French. I have written a paper now, which I was going to give you if I might, on this subject of the future disposal of the Caucasus country.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We can discuss it.

GENERAL WILSON: We shall plead strongly against the French coming in.

LORD CURZON: Would you like us to read your Paper? I think it would be as well, perhaps, if you first read what passed here on Monday, because the gravest suspicions were expressed in some quarters—by myself among others—as to the prospect of the French acquiring control over those regions in the future. That may or may not be your view.

GENERAL WILSON: It is.

LORD CURZON: I think perhaps if you will read what we said upon the matter and then put in your Paper it can be circulated, and if you wish to do so we will take up the matter at another meeting.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We must take it up, for no decision was taken at all.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I was not at Monday's meeting, either, and I should very much like to point out the importance of Trans-Caucasia and Cis-Caucasia to us, and to draw special attention to the agreement I made with General Foch on the 23rd December of last year, which put the whole of the Caucasus within the British sphere as against the French, the French being confined to the Ukraine and the Crimea.

GENERAL SMUTS: Did they get the Crimea?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Yes.

GENERAL SMUTS: There is a telegram from Admiral Calthorpe in which he asks for troops from General Franchet d'Esperey to come and occupy Sebastopol.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: That was in their sphere. It seems to me that that agreement is as valuable to us as the Sykes-Picot Agreement is to the French.

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LORD CURZON: It was a military agreement, and related solely to the military occupation of those countries.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: The one which was signed by M. Pichon on behalf of his Government——

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should think it would be as well to have the agreement circulated to this Committee.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: It is the only thing we have got on paper which really gives us something to bargain with against the French, and to make away with the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Shall we do that? Perhaps General Wilson and General Macdonogh will read what has passed here—they will get a copy of it to-morrow—and will circulate to us the Paper by the C.I.G.S. and a copy of the agreement, and then we will take it up again at our next meeting.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Yes.

SYRIA.

LORD CURZON: To-day we are going to take what is perhaps the most perplexing of all these issues, because it raises the main source of possible conflict between ourselves, on the one hand, and the French and the Arabs on the other, namely, the question of Syria. I propose to take Syria apart from Palestine, that is to say, to take the case of Palestine after that of Syria, because, although they are a part of the same problem, they can be both geographically and politically distinguished, and I am rather reluctant, in the discussion on the vexed question of Syria, that we should get enmeshed in the scarcely less difficult problems that arise out of Palestine. In the summary I am now going to give I will deal with Syria as apart from Palestine.

We have already, in our discussion last week about Mesopotamia and the countries bordering thereon, incidentally touched upon the Syrian question, in so far as we referred to the Arab populations inhabiting Jezireh, and to Cilicia on the north, and its possible destiny as a home for the Armenian peoples. I shall say as little as I can about those aspects of the case to-day.

I propose to give in the case of Syria, as I have done in my previous statements here, first, the historical facts of the case; secondly, the position in which we are now placed; thirdly, the policy which, at the Peace Conference or before, it seems desirable to pursue.

First, as regards the facts of the case. The various pledges are given in the Foreign Office Paper* which has been circulated, and I need only refer to them in the briefest possible words. In their bearing upon Syria they are the following: First, there was the letter to King Hussein from Sir Henry McMahon, of the 24th October, 1915, in which we gave him the assurance that the Hejaz, the red area which we commonly call Mesopotamia, the brown area or Palestine, the Acre–Haifa enclave, the big Arab areas (A) and (B), and the whole of the Arab Peninsula down to Aden, should be Arab and independent. No pledge, direct or indirect, was given in that assurance that King Hussein should either be the titular sovereign or even the suzerain of such a Confederation of States.

Secondly, there was the declaration† made by the Foreign Office to certain Syrians on the 11th June, 1918, which was afterwards made public. In that declaration we stated, first, that in regard to the areas in Arabia which had been free and independent before the war, and secondly in regard to the areas which had been emancipated from Turkey by the action of the Arabs themselves in the war, we recognised the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs. These are the two general engagements which have been made about this area.

Then we come to specific engagements made at different periods. The first of these, which cannot be altogether omitted, although it is remote, is the well-known *règlement organique* of the Lebanon vilayet, the dates of which are June 1861 and September 1864, by which the Great Powers of Europe, including ourselves, committed themselves to a form of autonomy for that region under a Christian Governor with an Administrative Council, and with certain further provisions as regards the details of the administration. I think the question may be raised, although I do not want to lay very much stress upon

* E.C. 2201. † E.C. 1835.

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it to-day, whether the terms of that Agreement—by which we and the other Powers are still bound—are compatible with the rights in the blue area which were conceded to France under the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. My own view is that, strictly speaking, they are not. One clause in the Sykes-Picot Agreement gave France a right to establish such administration, direct or indirect, or such control, as she might desire and might find suitable to establish in the blue area, after agreement with the Arab State or Confederation; and I do find some little difficulty—which may emerge as a not altogether useless argument later on—in reconciling those promises with the earlier engagements of the *règlement organique* of the Lebanon.

The next specific Agreement was the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916, and here—because it is vital that we should bear it in mind at every stage of this examination of the Syrian question—let me once again remind the Committee of what that did. It gave to France powers of direct or indirect administration or control in the blue area, south of a line drawn, I think, from Alexandretta to Killis, that is to say, south of the borders of Cilicia to a southern boundary somewhere north of Acre, running through the Sea of Galilee to the east side of the Jordan. This blue area, in relation to the problem we are examining to-day, includes Alexandretta, Antioch, the ports of Latakia and Tripoli, and the railway running from Tripoli nearly to Homs; it includes Beirut, Baalbek, and the railway running from Beirut nearly to Damascus, Sidon, Tyre, and Banias, on the northern confines of the old Palestine, which, on the Turkish maps is marked as Huleh, the Scriptural Dan. So much for the blue area.

In area (A) France is given priority of enterprise and loans, and the exclusive right to supply such advisers or functionaries as may be required by the Arab State. In this area are found Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus, as well as the regions of the Upper Euphrates and the Upper Tigris; at the same time France is pledged by the engagements to which I have already referred to recognise and uphold within this area an independent Arab State or Confederacy under the suzerainty of an Arab chief.

The third specific declaration is the Anglo-French declaration* of the 9th November, 1918, the full importance of which I sometimes think we have not sufficiently realised in this room. This applies both to the blue area and to the red area, or Mesopotamia, and also to A and B. In this declaration France and Great Britain pledged themselves to encourage and assist and, in due time, to recognise the establishment of native Governments in those regions which are generally described as Syria and Mesopotamia in the declaration; secondly, not to impose any particular institutions upon them; thirdly, to give support and efficacious assistance to the normal working of these native institutions when set up. These phrases, as you will observe, are, and could hardly be otherwise than, vague. They are incompatible, of course, with the setting up of any French Government or British Government in any of the areas affected, and *a fortiori* are even more incompatible with annexation. But they are compatible—and here a difficulty will probably arise—with the appointment of French or British functionaries, as the case may be, as provided for in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Still, although disputes may arise about form and words, in substance that declaration of the 9th November, 1918, does to a large extent supersede the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and when we are counting up the various weapons we have in our hands for dealing with the Sykes-Picot Agreement later on, I think we shall find ourselves laying very great stress upon the general spirit, if not upon the actual terms, of the declaration to which I refer.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That, of course, was its object.

LORD CURZON: Yes, so much for the commitments by which we are bound.

Now let me take the facts of the case as they have emerged during the history of the last two years. When the Sykes-Picot Agreement was drawn up it was, no doubt, intended by its authors, of whom I was not one (and I do not think any of us in this room had very much to do with it), as a sort of fancy sketch to suit a situation that had not then arisen, and which it was thought extremely unlikely would ever arise; and that, I suppose, must be the principal explanation of the gross ignorance with which the boundary lines in that Agreement were drawn. Let me give in passing only three illustrations of the extent to which that Agreement, in relation to Syria at any rate, is not only obsolete, but absolutely impracticable. First, as we pointed out at our meeting a week ago, it brings the French sphere right up to Mosul and the Upper Tigris, and far into Kurdistan lying beyond; secondly, it splits up the Arabs in the areas A and B by a most fantastic and incredible line of division; and,

* E.C. 2136 A.

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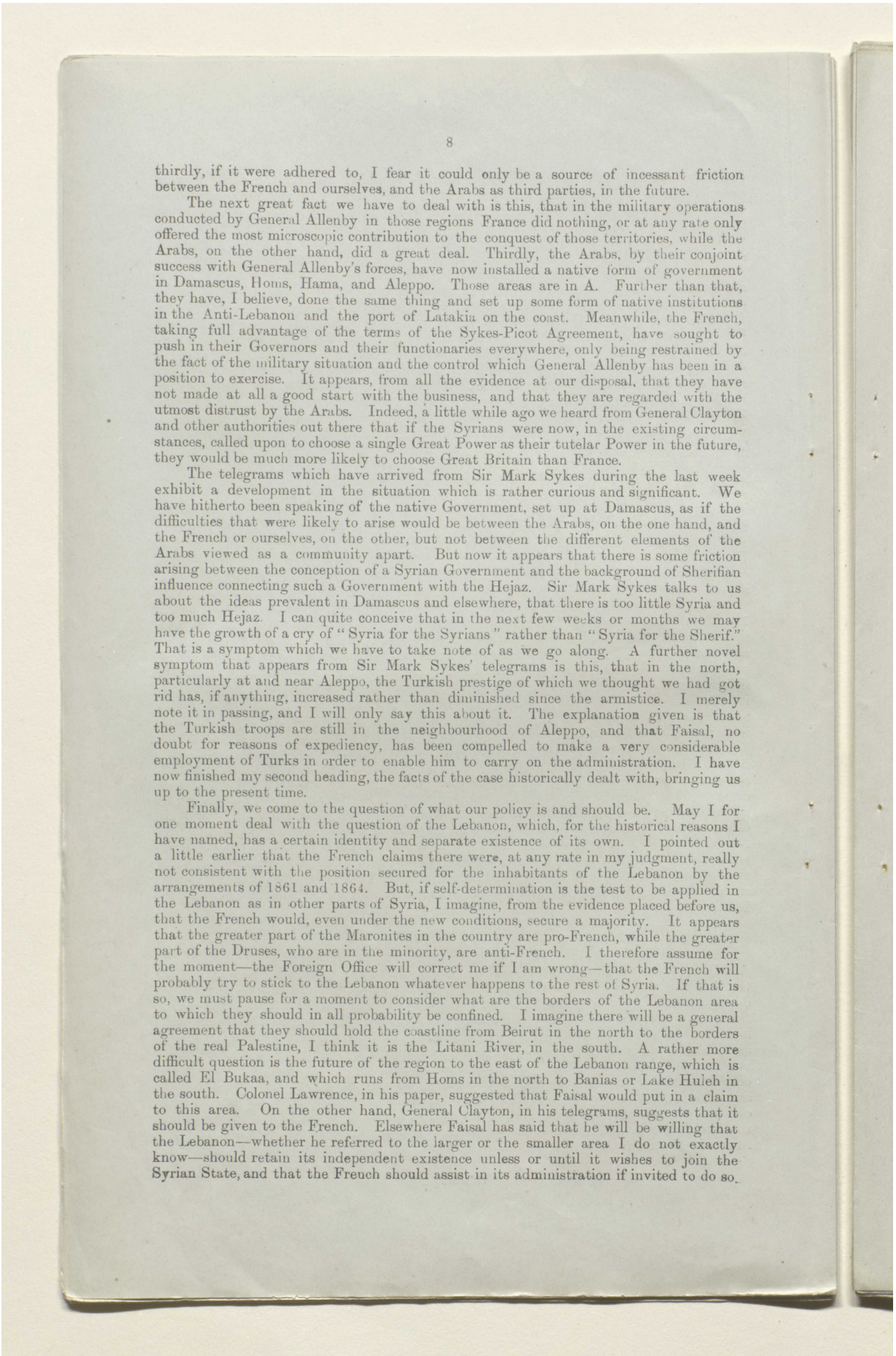

thirdly, if it were adhered to, I fear it could only be a source of incessant friction between the French and ourselves, and the Arabs as third parties, in the future.

The next great fact we have to deal with is this, that in the military operations conducted by General Allenby in those regions France did nothing, or at any rate only offered the most microscopic contribution to the conquest of those territories, while the Arabs, on the other hand, did a great deal. Thirdly, the Arabs, by their conjoint success with General Allenby's forces, have now installed a native form of government in Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. Those areas are in A. Further than that, they have, I believe, done the same thing and set up some form of native institutions in the Anti-Lebanon and the port of Latakia on the coast. Meanwhile, the French, taking full advantage of the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, have sought to push in their Governors and their functionaries everywhere, only being restrained by the fact of the military situation and the control which General Allenby has been in a position to exercise. It appears, from all the evidence at our disposal, that they have not made at all a good start with the business, and that they are regarded with the utmost distrust by the Arabs. Indeed, a little while ago we heard from General Clayton and other authorities out there that if the Syrians were now, in the existing circumstances, called upon to choose a single Great Power as their tutelar Power in the future, they would be much more likely to choose Great Britain than France.

The telegrams which have arrived from Sir Mark Sykes during the last week exhibit a development in the situation which is rather curious and significant. We have hitherto been speaking of the native Government, set up at Damascus, as if the difficulties that were likely to arise would be between the Arabs, on the one hand, and the French or ourselves, on the other, but not between the different elements of the Arabs viewed as a community apart. But now it appears that there is some friction arising between the conception of a Syrian Government and the background of Sherifian influence connecting such a Government with the Hejaz. Sir Mark Sykes talks to us about the ideas prevalent in Damascus and elsewhere, that there is too little Syria and too much Hejaz. I can quite conceive that in the next few weeks or months we may have the growth of a cry of "Syria for the Syrians" rather than "Syria for the Sherif." That is a symptom which we have to take note of as we go along. A further novel symptom that appears from Sir Mark Sykes' telegrams is this, that in the north, particularly at and near Aleppo, the Turkish prestige of which we thought we had got rid has, if anything, increased rather than diminished since the armistice. I merely note it in passing, and I will only say this about it. The explanation given is that the Turkish troops are still in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, and that Faisal, no doubt for reasons of expediency, has been compelled to make a very considerable employment of Turks in order to enable him to carry on the administration. I have now finished my second heading, the facts of the case historically dealt with, bringing us up to the present time.

Finally, we come to the question of what our policy is and should be. May I for one moment deal with the question of the Lebanon, which, for the historical reasons I have named, has a certain identity and separate existence of its own. I pointed out a little earlier that the French claims there were, at any rate in my judgment, really not consistent with the position secured for the inhabitants of the Lebanon by the arrangements of 1861 and 1864. But, if self-determination is the test to be applied in the Lebanon as in other parts of Syria, I imagine, from the evidence placed before us, that the French would, even under the new conditions, secure a majority. It appears that the greater part of the Maronites in the country are pro-French, while the greater part of the Druses, who are in the minority, are anti-French. I therefore assume for the moment—the Foreign Office will correct me if I am wrong—that the French will probably try to stick to the Lebanon whatever happens to the rest of Syria. If that is so, we must pause for a moment to consider what are the borders of the Lebanon area to which they should in all probability be confined. I imagine there will be a general agreement that they should hold the coastline from Beirut in the north to the borders of the real Palestine, I think it is the Litani River, in the south. A rather more difficult question is the future of the region to the east of the Lebanon range, which is called El Bukaa, and which runs from Homs in the north to Banias or Lake Huleh in the south. Colonel Lawrence, in his paper, suggested that Faisal would put in a claim to this area. On the other hand, General Clayton, in his telegrams, suggests that it should be given to the French. Elsewhere Faisal has said that he will be willing that the Lebanon—whether he referred to the larger or the smaller area I do not exactly know—should retain its independent existence unless or until it wishes to join the Syrian State, and that the French should assist in its administration if invited to do so.

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One of our authorities at this moment puts in the query: What will the United States say? They have a formidable missionary interest at Beirut, they are much concerned in that part of the world, and it may be, although we need not pause to dilate upon it here, that a French future for the Lebanon might not altogether be received with enthusiasm by them.

Next we come to the area immediately north of the Lebanon, which runs along the coast from Arsus, south of Alexandretta, to Tripoli, and includes the seaport—for what it is worth—of Latakia, Tripoli, and the railway from Tripoli to Homs.

(*At this point Mr. Balfour entered the room.*)

Faisal lays great stress, and in fact insists, upon this being part of the Arab or Syrian State which he is setting up.

Then, pursuing our investigations further to the north, we come to the area in the Gulf of Iskanderun, from Arsus to Payas, north of Alexandretta, the confines of this portion of the country, on the land side, probably being the crest of the Amanus Range. This area includes Alexandretta, which, under the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, was to go to the French, but to be a free port for British trade. If the French destination for this area survives, let us note in passing that Faisal claims that the same commercial privileges or right of usage as a free port shall be conceded to him as are conceded to the British. North again of this area we come to the region which we were dealing with the other day, and which I need not further mention this afternoon, namely, Cilicia and the Armenians.

Thus we see we are getting into this position, that we are face to face with what looks very much like a rather complicated and dangerous system of partition of the coast-line of Palestine up to the Gulf of Alexandretta:—

1. Palestine in the south, whatever be its future;
2. A French strip of the Lebanon;
3. An Arab or Syrian strip, including Tripoli and Latakia; and
4. A French enclave, including the port of Alexandretta in the north.

That seems to be the position to which we are being driven. Of course there is an alternative to this, namely, the plan of getting France out of Syria altogether, by paying her a price elsewhere—which may have to be very considerable—offering her Armenia or some other large sphere of political influence in Asia Minor. Here, again, I suppose if we consulted our own feelings we should all of us like to get the French out of Syria altogether, both because we fear that they will be bad neighbours to us not only in Palestine, if we remain there, but in the Arab areas adjoining, over which we must exercise considerable influence, and because, in the event of trouble with the French in the future, the presence of the French in this part of Syria would undoubtedly impose heavy military responsibilities upon Egypt. What, however, are we to do? Reading the Papers, I find two strains of opinion. Some say "Back the French at the expense of Faisal; after all, the French are a great Power, and you have to be on good terms with her in different parts of the world; you have committed yourselves—foolishly or otherwise—by the Sykes-Picot Agreement; see her through to the best of your ability, and do not be too much concerned about the Arabs." On the other hand there is another party, of whom I think Colonel Lawrence is the spokesman, who say, "The fact that you are involved with the French by agreements out of which you want to extricate yourselves is no reason why you should be at all unfair to the Arabs; and, viewing the facts that you are a great Eastern Power, that you have assumed this responsibility in Mesopotamia, that the whole of this area is or ought to be British in general political inclination, your policy is to back Faisal rather than the French."

Of course we are involved in these difficulties in the main by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and one question I should like to put at this stage to the Foreign Office—and I am glad to see that Mr. Balfour is here—is this: Is it possible that, when we sit down to the Peace Conference, President Wilson might say, and might get us out of a great difficulty by saying, "Here we are inaugurating a new era of free and open diplomacy; the various States of Europe have bound themselves by all sorts of unscrupulous secret engagements in the earlier years of the war; before we enter into any arrangements for the future let us sweep all those off the board; let the Sykes-Picot Agreement go, let the Agreement with the Italians go, and let us start with a clean slate?" It is a question I cannot answer, and it may be one which, even if President Wilson puts it, which I think not unlikely, our Allies, whatever attitude we

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take up, might decline to accept for themselves. I put the question to the Foreign Secretary with a view of suggesting that, if President Wilson took that line and if we could persuade our Allies to take it also and start afresh, we should in some respects be freed from the main embarrassments of our present situation. If that is impossible, may I suggest that our line of action probably should be this, to back Faisal and the Arabs as far as we can, up to the point of not alienating the French, the bent of whose ambitions turns towards the East and a future French sphere in those regions. For the safety of our Eastern Empire I would sooner come to a satisfactory arrangement with the Arabs than I would with the French, but I would not carry the arrangement with the Arabs to the point of quarrelling with the French. Secondly, if that be our line of action as regards Faisal, ought we not to play the policy of self-determination for all it is worth? When we made the Anglo-French declaration in November last, I think, as often happens, we hardly realised what its full purport and bearing might be. Perhaps, I am interested in the matter, perhaps, I am inclined to value the argument of self-determination, because I believe that most of the people would determine in our favour.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think there is any doubt at all as to what was the object of the declaration. The reason why I was prepared to give great concessions to the French in order to get that declaration was because I thought it was of such tremendous value to us to remedy the evil of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

LORD CURZON: I am glad to hear you say that, because that is the point of view from which I am regarding it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It does not do more than limit it, but it does that much.

LORD CURZON: I have now completed my statement. My last remark was, self-determination having been laid down, if we cannot get out of our difficulties in any other way we ought to play self-determination for all it is worth wherever we are involved in difficulties with the French, the Arabs, or anybody else, and leave the case to be settled by that final argument knowing in the bottom of our hearts that we are more likely to benefit from it than is anybody else.

MR. BALFOUR: Although I am really an interloper in this Committee, as you have put a question to me I will make one observation in answer to it before I have to go and keep my Foreign Office appointments. I am entirely of opinion that self-determination—the broad principle of self-determination—is the one that we should work for. Nor is there anything new in it. I think the word was used, as far as my memory serves me, in a despatch that was written before America came into the war, a despatch rather explaining the war aims from the British point of view, a despatch I wrote, which I think my colleagues approved, and which remains as a record of the views of the British Government at that time—that is to say, in January 1917. There you will see that the general sentiment running throughout it was freedom for the nations and self-determination, and all that order of ideas. What was true then has become steadily more true since, and all our declarations to these innumerable competitors for independence—all the Baltic provinces and the populations which wish to attach themselves to Roumania, the Czecho-Slovaks, the Yugo-Slavs, and all the rest of these incipient nationalities—have had as their major premise, so to speak, the wishes of the populations concerned to be a leading if not the absolutely determining factor in all our policy. Therefore, for myself, I would accept the statement of Lord Curzon wholeheartedly, re-emphasising, if I may, what Lord Robert Cecil has just said, that the joint declaration of France and Britain, which he engineered, is itself a tribute to that principle. However, two things must be borne in mind, one of which is that we must not allow ourselves to be driven by that broad principle into applying it pedantically where it is really inapplicable, namely, to wholly barbarous, undeveloped, and unorganised black tribes, whether they be in the Pacific or Africa. Self-determination there, I do not say has no meaning, I do not say it has not even a real meaning, but evidently you cannot transfer formulas more or less applicable to the populations of Europe to those utterly different races. That is my first observation, although I do not know that it is of very great importance in connection with this discussion. The only other observation I have to make is of the utmost importance, with regard to the diplomacy of the situation as Lord Curzon has described it to us. I am quite certain that we ought to be most careful not to give either the French or the Italians the impression that we are trying to get out of our bargains with them made at an earlier

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and different stage of the war. If the Americans can get us out well and good. If the Americans, having come in late and, now that they have come in, possessing very considerable powers of putting pressure on their various associated allies, choose to do it, we can only congratulate ourselves upon their success. But it is all-important that we should not only not do it ourselves, but that we should not either appear to do it or really do it.

So far as the treaty of 1915 is concerned, or so far as the Sykes-Picot Agreement is concerned, the Italians and the French think that we are bound in honour by them. I never quite understood the inception of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, I never thoroughly understood it, and do not understand it to this day. As regards the Italian treaty, its origin is quite simple and quite plain. The Italians practically said, "Our assistance is worth so much to the Allies; if that assistance is to be given, *this* is the price which must be given for it." Is it unkind to say that they characteristically show the keenest desire that every penny of that price should be paid? We have engaged to pay it, and if they want payment I think we must pay without bargaining. It is for the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to say—if it is worth going back on it—whether it was worth giving that price for Italian assistance. I am inclined to think that it was, and that if the Italians had not come in our difficulties might have been very great, incompetent as many think the Italians have been in the actual conduct of the war. But, whether they were worth the price so extracted from us or not, the price was promised, and I do not think we ought to do anything to indicate that we propose to haggle over the terms now that the goods have been delivered. They have come in, and among us we have been successful, and it is no use going back and saying what proportion of the success is due to Italian competence in the field or elsewhere, but at all events there is the fact.

LORD CURZON: What is the precise application of your argument as regards Italy in relation to this area we are discussing to-day?

MR. BALFOUR: Because they hang together. Perhaps I ought not to have dwelt upon it for so long. That and the Sykes-Picot Agreement hang together in this way. They were both arrangements which were made before America came in, and both were made for a price connected with the war. The war is over, and the price in both cases, so far as we are concerned, must be paid without chicanery. If the Americans choose to step in and cut the knot, that is their affair, but we must not put the knife into their hand. We will say, "You have the power in your hand, you go and do it." There is a danger, and a very real danger, and I am not at all sure that whatever dexterity we use we shall be able to keep out of it altogether. I am sure we ought to try, and sincerely try. That is all I have to say.

LORD CURZON: Do you think there is any chance of the President taking the line I suggested?

MR. BALFOUR: I think there is a great chance.

LORD CURZON: And asking, before the beginning of the Conference, that these engagements should be swept into limbo and wiped off the slate?

MR. BALFOUR: I think there is a great chance of his wishing to do it, but before he does it he will probably try the ground and make experiments. He will find the Italians, and, I think, the French, perfectly furious at the suggestion.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The French are mad about it already.

GENERAL SMUTS: This is the question, whether we are going to help him or them in this policy.

MR. BALFOUR: We should help him in cases of difference, at least, and in regard to any place not touched by the Agreement we would help them, but how can we help him in matters touched by the Agreement?

GENERAL SMUTS: You mean in regard to these Agreements we should be passive.

MR. BALFOUR: I think so. The Italian demands, if you look at them in the light of reason or justice or anything else, except the price given for necessary assistance, are outrageous. How the Italians could exist in Rhodes, where there is not an Italian in existence, I cannot think. I only give that as a specimen.

GENERAL SMUTS: And the cutting up of Anatolia?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I say a few words in addition to what Mr. Balfour has said. I agree with all Mr. Balfour has said. I have, as Lord Curzon knows, sustained feebly the same point of view more or less on various occasions. As to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, I understand—though I had nothing to do with it, and did not know of its existence until after it was made—it was made in connection with the French attitude towards the Egyptian campaign—exactly what it was I do not know. When the Egyptian campaign began the French said, "What do you really mean about your movement towards Palestine? We want to know what you really mean." Then the Sykes-Picot Agreement was come to in order to satisfy them that what we did mean, if we succeeded——

LORD CURZON: Was it not the result of an investigation conducted in the Foreign Office under the chairmanship of Lord Carnock?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I am sorry to say that I am the only person present who was a member of that Committee. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was being drafted when I came to the War Office in January 1916, I think. I only attended one meeting, about the 18th January. The Chairman of the Committee was Lord Carnock. There was Sir Mark Sykes, Picot, myself, I think Admiral Hall, and one or two others whom I forget. I remember protesting against the Agreement at the time, but it was certainly made, as Lord Robert Cecil says, in order to try and prevent the great jealousy of the French as to our action in Egypt. I remember Lord Carnock mentioning that at the time.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is right, and therefore it does come within Mr. Balfour's principle, that it was an agreement made for a definite war purpose, and I entirely agree that we cannot go back on it in the least forcibly. We might try and persuade the French to let us off, but that is all we can do. In considering that I think we have got those factors in our favour. There is the declaration which has been referred to, there is the letter* to M. Pichon, in which we proposed a reconsideration of the Sykes-Picot Agreement on the ground that it was out of date, to which they assented,† although afterwards they have withdrawn, or have tried to withdraw, their assent; but they assented, and we took note of their assent. Therefore they cannot go back upon that. That brings in the Americans to discuss the Agreement. We are not doing anything dishonest in discussing the merits of the Agreement with the Americans, and if the French and Italians have that idea we can say in the last resort, if the French insist, we cannot go back upon our signature. I think we are entitled to do that with regard to that letter. Then I should like to say this. I am a little afraid of pressing self-determination, quite apart from treaty obligations, too far. It is not very easy to apply, for instance, in this case. We are told that the Uniates, certain districts round Beirut, want the French. If you are going to press the thing too far you are in a difficulty already, and I have a kind of conviction that a lot of other people will turn out to want the French, and the French will in a little time organise those parts. That is one thing. It puts a premium on intrigue if you press it too far. The other general observation I want to make is this. I think it would be an awful mistake if we think we can get rid of the French out of Syria. I know that Colonel Lawrence will not approve of that observation, but I am quite sure you will never get the French to give up the whole of Syria without the most tremendous convulsion. They would rather give up anything in the world than give up that claim to Syria; they are mad about it, and Cambon himself is quite insane if you suggest it. I am sure you will never get them out of Syria, and we ought to make up our mind to go for some settlement which will give them some position in Syria, however unpleasant it may be to have them there. You must give them Beirut and a bit of the Lebanon at any rate. I do not think you can do less than that myself.

I should like to say here that I prefer General Smuts' League of Nations' position to the pure self-determination position.

MR. BALFOUR: Would not that rather depend upon the character of the populations you were dealing with?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. What I mean is this: Self-determination should be an indication, but you must not tie yourself to it pedantically. It would be a good indication for a League of Nations' body to work on. But in territories of this kind we should not attempt to leave it to the populations to say, because you would have

* E.C. 1915. † E.C. 2044.

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the most awful rows if you did that, except in certain districts. You should take a broad view of the evidence of what populations want and should then draw up their boundaries. That is the only thing to be done. I do think we are entitled to say this to the French: "We are bound to give you Alsace-Lorraine, and we are not going to suggest you are not to have it, but you want the 1815 boundary."

MR. BALFOUR: We are not bound by treaty to give it to them.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No; but we could not go back on that. We have never said anything to the French to the effect that we will give them the 1815 boundary for which they are clamouring, still less, as some of them want, to go to the left bank of the Rhine. Therefore, if there is to be anything of that kind—the 1815 boundary is a real thing, because they think it important from a strategic point of view, and will insist upon it——

MR. BALFOUR: Coal is the point as much as strategy.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: But they will put it on the ground of strategy. If they are going to do that, and if we are to be asked to support them, then we must have good terms in Syria.

GENERAL SMUTS: Unless we want to break with America we could not support them on that.

MR. BALFOUR: We must be very careful indeed.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree it will be difficult, but it is a thing we can remind the French of at intervals, that they want something out of us.

(*At this point Mr. Balfour requested that shorthand notes should not be taken.*)

(*After a short interval*)

LORD CURZON: Mr. Balfour, you made a remark just now about putting all our cards on the table with the French. This question of Syria which we are examining to-day is not merely a question of the boundaries of Palestine or the future of the Lebanon, or even of the port of Alexandretta; it carries us much further to the East. As you know, it goes right into the territories of the upper waters of the Euphrates, of the Tigris, and so on. We shall not get out of that difficulty by the principle of self-determination nor by the League of Nations; we must, at some time or another, have an agreement with the French about it. Am I to deduce from what you have said that you think it would be wise, at some time or other, to put our cards on the table about this territory and the others?

MR. BALFOUR: I think it is quite worth considering; but, of course, there is always the difficulty—and it is going to be a very great difficulty facing us in the next three weeks, and General Smuts knows it will—of why we should be suspected by the French. The French very much want us to help them against the Americans.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is the real point.

(*Mr. Balfour asked that his remarks should not be taken down.*)

(*After a short interval.*)

GENERAL WILSON: There is a sentence in a letter written by Sir Edward Grey to M. Cambon, dated the 16th May, 1916 (G.T.–368), about the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which seems to me to have a bearing on the matter. He says: "I have to inform your Excellency, in reply that the acceptance of the whole project, as it now stands, will involve the abdication of considerable British interests, but, since His Majesty's Government recognise the advantage to the general cause of the Allies entailed in producing a more favourable internal political situation in Turkey, they are ready to accept the arrangement now arrived at, provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured." Does not that knock the whole Sykes-Picot Agreement out?

LORD CURZON: There is a second condition, which the Arabs have fulfilled.

GENERAL WILSON: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think it does knock it out. We did secure the co-operation of the Arabs.

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LORD CURZON: That is military co-operation, is it not?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: This was in order to get them.

GENERAL WILSON: The co-operation of the Arabs is secured.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, they have co-operated with us.

GENERAL SMUTS: That means military co-operation. It does not mean consent.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The object then was this. We were very anxious to get the Hussein kingdom on its legs and to get the co-operation of the Arabs, which was thought to be important. That was the object of it.

GENERAL WILSON: It does not say so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think it meant that.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: What bearing has the Sykes-Picot Agreement upon the military co-operation of the Arabs?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It was the other way. They said, "We make the agreement, but you must understand we make it subject to this, that if we find it utterly destroys the co-operation of the Arabs we shall have to reconsider our position." Then Sykes and Picot did go down to King Hussein, and thought they conveyed to King Hussein the terms of the Agreement. King Hussein now loudly declares he was never told anything about it, and that is one of his great grievances, of course. He says he never understood the Agreement at all.

LORD CURZON: I think your interpretation is quite clearly the right one, if you read the sentence as a whole: "They are ready"—that is, His Majesty's Government—"to accept the arrangement now arrived at, provided that the co-operation of the Arabs is secured, and that the Arabs fulfil the conditions and obtain the towns of Homs, Hama, Damascus, and Aleppo." Clearly the reference must be to military co-operation, because the form which it was expected to take is stated, and the exact military fulfilment of the conditions is laid down in terms. If the subsequent co-operation of the Arabs was alluded to, *i.e.*, the subsequent acceptance of the agreement, the sentence would surely have come second and not first. I think you must read the phrase "co-operation of the Arabs" in the light of the sentence that follows, which defines its meaning. Mr. Balfour, before you go may I say this: In the course of my examination I have been sketching out the way in which things will work out if we cannot get rid of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. If we are held to our bargain with the French, if the feelings of the French are as described by Lord Robert Cecil and M. Cambon, we seem to be very near to something like a partition of the Syrian coast—a Palestinian area, a French area, an Arab area or a Syrian area; again a French area, and possibly an Armenian area in the north. Is that a situation you would look forward to with any equanimity? Let me put it in another way. Do you think we can isolate the French in the Lebanon, give them that, and say "We do not want a dispute about this; you have a majority there, you have sentimental and other interests there, by all means, but we must try and englobe you, so to speak, in Syrian and Arab spheres, and prevent you from going too far or becoming too mischievous?"

MR. BALFOUR: Perhaps I may answer your question by asking another: Are you afraid, by giving the French a fragment of this coast, that you give them a jumping-off ground for far oriental ambitions?

LORD CURZON: No, not the least. The way I am looking at it is this, from the point of view of the Arabs. It seems to me perfectly absurd to set up an Arab State under Faisal at Damascus, and to say to him: "My dear fellow, here you are, do what you like in this region; but we are bound to block you out, by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, from the sea, Tripoli, and Latakia." That is an inconceivable position to put him in. The only other alternative is to let him have the railway from Tripoli to Homs.

MR. BALFOUR: We have commercial rights which, no doubt, might be extended to other nations through Alexandretta, and we have rights through a port in Palestine.

LORD CURZON: Haifa; yes.

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MR. BALFOUR: I do not know its commercial value. Arabia is not cut off from the sea. I do not think we can conceive Arabia as a potential sea Power, with a merchant fleet. That has never been in their mind at all. They have depended for their oversea trade upon other peoples' ships and ports, and they will not feel being cut off from the sea as a European nation would feel it; so that if we can secure for them access to foreign goods, as we shall secure for them, and if we keep these ports open, I do not know that they have very much to lose by the French having this strip of coastline.

LORD CURZON: I think Colonel Lawrence would probably disagree with that. It would mean this: If Beirut is French, the whole of the railway up to the gates of Damascus is French, though Damascus is to be an Arab town. If they have Tripoli it would mean almost the whole of the railway to Homs must be French too. Homs is an Arab town. I cannot conceive an Arab State accepting such a situation. Perhaps Colonel Lawrence will tell us what he thinks about it.

COLONEL LAWRENCE: The position of the port is a very serious one, for two reasons. Firstly, Customs. It is a question whether you give the French the whole strip of the Syrian coast and hand over the Customs of the Syrian ports to the interior?

MR. BALFOUR: Yes. You mean that the French might abuse their position as the owner of the sea to tax the through traffic?

COLONEL LAWRENCE: Not only that; indirect taxation in Turkey is the thing from which the whole of the Government revenue is drawn, and direct taxation is worthless.

GENERAL SMUTS: They would not be able to use that form of taxation, because along the frontier there would be so much smuggling that they could not use it; and they could not do it at the coast, because it is not in their hands.

MR. BALFOUR: That might be a matter of international arrangement. I speak merely of the coast of Syria. I think we shall have to consider this question of access from the sea and taxation from an international point of view in connection with the European ports.

COLONEL LAWRENCE: And I think it is a mistake to call Faisal's State "Arabia." We call it "Arab," because that is an adjective only. Arabia, perhaps, has access to the sea in the Red Sea, and requires nothing more than it has. Syria hopes to cut itself off, as far as possible, from the Hejaz. A separatist movement is on foot, and, as far as I can influence it, it will become stronger still. Syria, as laid down in the striped area on the Sykes-Picot map, is an impossible country; it has an immense desert frontier and no sea frontier. Even supposing the French were good about Customs, receipts, and railway dues, it would never be a country that would be more than a source of discord, if you cut it off from Arabia in the south, the sea on the west, and Mesopotamia on the east.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am strongly in favour of having an Arab port at Tripoli. Apart from that, Damascus does not depend upon Tripoli, does it?

COLONEL LAWRENCE: I think it will in the future.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Its present great trading relations are with the south?

COLONEL LAWRENCE: With Haifa? Not much.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is mainly the market for Arabia?

COLONEL LAWRENCE: No. From Beirut is where it comes most, and from Tripoli and Homs, but that is a railway matter. The railway line from Tripoli to Homs is the only commercial railway that will exist between the sea and the interior.

LORD CURZON: Do you incline to this partition on the coast that I have been sketching out? Do you think it is a feasible arrangement?

COLONEL LAWRENCE: I think we have involved ourselves in it as the only solution, although it is very unfortunate.

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LORD CURZON: By "partition" I mean leaving the French in the Lebanon and leaving them again at Alexandretta, and bringing—according to your ideas, which I understand will be Faisal's views—the Syrian State down to the coast of Tripoli between the two enclaves of French territory.

COLONEL LAWRENCE: Accept that as a minimum. One port, Tripoli, would be enough. I would advise the Arabs to carry on with the one port, supposing they could get no more.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You must remember this. If the new ideas come to anything, any arrangement come to may have to be reconsidered; it will not be for ever and ever. I hope the idea of eternal treaties has gone.

COLONEL LAWRENCE: Self-determination has been a good deal talked about I think it is a foolish idea in many ways. We might allow the people who have fought with us to determine themselves. People like the Mesopotamian Arabs, who have fought against us, deserve nothing from us in the way of self-determination. No doubt the situation will change again and again.

MR. BALFOUR: That is the privilege of the conquerors.

LORD CURZON: Have you anything to say about the military aspect of the case, General Wilson?

GENERAL WILSON: The Paper* I have written goes into that.

LORD CURZON: You deal with this country too in your Paper?

GENERAL WILSON: Yes, we cannot help it.

LORD CURZON: Would you like to say anything about it?

GENERAL WILSON: I would rather wait until you have read the Paper. It is not a long Paper, but it deals with the crossed bit of work *there*.

GENERAL SMUTS: We must have another meeting and come back to the whole question of the Caucasus, and then get the final conclusions at the next meeting.

(*Mr. Balfour withdrew.*)

LORD CURZON: Would you like to say anything, General Macdonogh?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I have nothing to add to what is in my Paper.†

GENERAL SMUTS: It incorporates a lot of the material given by Commander Hogarth and Colonel Lawrence, so that your view is a considered view arrived at after considering a lot of evidence?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Yes.

PALESTINE.

LORD CURZON: There is a general feeling that we had better postpone the consideration of the Syrian question until we have had General Wilson's Paper, and obviously we are not in a position to arrive at conclusions to-day. I suggest that we should pass on and take the Palestine case, which, I think, as I argued before, is capable of being considered apart from Syria.

The Palestine position is this. If we deal with our commitments, there is first the general pledge to Hussein in October 1915, under which Palestine was included in the areas as to which Great Britain pledged itself that they should be Arab and independent in the future. When we pass to the Sykes-Picot Agreement we find that it contained the following provisions, that Acre and Haifa should go to Great Britain, but that those ports should be free for French and Italian trade to the areas A and B inland. Further, under that Agreement we are at liberty to build and administer a railway from Haifa to Baghdad. I will only say about that, in passing, that the idea of building such a railway across the desert to Baghdad seems to me to be one of the wildest chimeras that ever entered into the brain of man, and how it entered into the minds of

* E.C. 2642. † E.C. 2133.

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the Committee or the persons who drafted this treaty I am at a loss to imagine. I would not have spent five seconds in thinking or talking about it.

Under the same Agreement we come next to the brown area of Palestine. Here, again, the most ridiculous and unfortunate boundaries seem to have been drawn for that area. I will come to the boundaries in a moment. As regards its future, Great Britain and France—Italy subsequently agreeing—committed themselves to an international administration for Palestine, in consultation with Russia, who was an ally at that time, a belligerent Ally, and with our other Allies and the representatives of the Sherif of Mecca. A new feature was brought into the case in November 1917, when Mr. Balfour, with the authority of the War Cabinet, issued his famous declaration to the Zionists that Palestine should be the national home of the Jewish people, but that nothing should be done—and this, of course, was a most important proviso—to prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. Those, as far as I know, are the only actual engagements into which we entered with regard to Palestine.

Now, as regards the facts, they are these. First, Palestine has been conquered by the British, with only very insignificant aid from small French and Italian contingents, and it is now being administered by the British. The Zionist declaration by our Government has been followed by a very considerable immigration of Jews. One of the difficulties of the situation arises from the fact that the Zionists have taken full advantage—and are disposed to take even fuller advantage—of the opportunity which was then offered to them. You have only to read, as probably most of us do, their periodical "Palestine," and, indeed, their pronouncements in the papers, to see that their programme is expanding from day to day. They now talk about a Jewish State. The Arab portion of the population is well-nigh forgotten and is to be ignored. They not only claim the boundaries of the old Palestine, but they claim to spread across the Jordan into the rich countries lying to the east, and, indeed, there seems to be very small limit to the aspirations which they now form. The Zionist programme, and the energy with which it is being carried out, have not unnaturally had the consequence of arousing the keen suspicions of the Arabs. By "the Arabs" I do not merely mean Faisal and his followers at Damascus, but the so-called Arabs who inhabit the country. There seems, from the telegrams we receive, to be growing up an increasing friction between the two communities, a feeling by the Arabs that we are really behind the Zionists and not behind the Arabs, and altogether a situation which is becoming rather critical. In one of the telegrams that reported the views of Faisal we were told that he is strongly of opinion that if a Great Power remains in the background of Palestine it should be ourselves; and if he is assured it will be Britain he would be prepared to support what I think he describes as the infiltration of the Zionists on a reasonable scale; but otherwise, if we are to go out of the matter and some other protecting Power is to come in, he will back the Arabs by all means in his power. We can imagine, therefore, a difficult situation arising in Palestine itself out of these circumstances. If we were supposed to have identified ourselves with the Jews, and the whole Arab force backed by Faisal on the other side were thrown into the scale against us, that would produce complication. We have difficulties with our European Allies as it is, and we do not want to have complications in Palestine itself. Upon both these parties beginning to feel these suspicions there falls the bombshell of the Anglo-French declaration. You can understand at once how the suspicions and, indeed, the activities of both parties are fomented by that, because once you appeal to the principle of self-determination, both Arabs and Zionists are prepared to make every use of it they can. No doubt we shall hear a good deal of that in the future, and, indeed, in it we may find a solution of our difficulties.

Now, as regards the future of Palestine. I said just now that one of the blemishes of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was the imperfect and unscientific manner in which the boundaries had been drawn. I imagine that, whatever arrangements we make about Syria in the future, we must put right and define upon some scientific basis the boundaries of Palestine itself. If you look at the Sykes-Picot map you will see a purely arbitrary line is drawn in the north which runs from a place on the coast southwards through the Sea of Galilee to the Jordan frontier. I imagine we shall all agree that we must recover for Palestine its old boundaries. The old phrase "Dan to Beersheba" still prevails. Whatever the administrative sub-divisions, we must recover for Palestine, be it Hebrew or Arab, or both, the boundaries up to the Litani on the coast, and across to Banias, the old Dan, or Huleh in the interior. So much for the northern boundary. Then we must have some definition of "eastern boundary." The Zionists are naturally looking eastwards to the trans-Jordan territories, where

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there is good cultivation and great possibilities in the future. Everybody wants to get out of the steaming Jordan Valley and on to the uplands beyond, and we are undoubtedly face to face with a movement which is growing on the part of the Zionists, that Palestine is now to include what certainly it has not included for many centuries, if it ever did, and what would be regarded by the Arabs as part of their domain. Finally, there is the southern boundary of Palestine. Here, a number of different considerations come in. On the one hand there are those who will say that the cultivable areas south of Gaza ought to be part of Palestine because they are necessary to the subsistence of the people. On the other hand, there are those who say: "Do not complicate the Palestine question by bringing in the Bedouins of the desert, whose face looks really towards Sinai, and who ought not to be associated with Palestine at all." I therefore suggest, in passing, when we are dealing with Palestine and when we go to the Peace Conference, that we shall have to make up our minds as to what is the kind of policy we propose for the northern, eastern, and the southern boundaries of Palestine.

Now comes the question of the future administration. I quoted just now the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, under which the scheme then in contemplation was international administration to be agreed upon between the Allies and the Arabs. I do not suppose you will find a single person in any country now in favour of that solution. Not only is international administration wherever it has been tried in Oriental countries a failure, but it is singularly unsuited to the conditions of Palestine. I doubt if at the Peace Conference a single voice will be raised in its favour. If I am right in that, and if a tutelar Power is to be appointed, either by a League of Nations under General Smuts' scheme or by the Peace Conference itself, or by the self-determination of the people, there then arises the question who that Power should be. Only three are really deserving of consideration: France, America, and ourselves. I do not think I need seriously discuss the case of France, because, whatever may be her own feelings, nobody else wants her there. Her presence there would be quite intolerable to ourselves, and it is clear it would be equally unwelcome to the people. There remain the United States and Great Britain. When the matter was brought before the Imperial War Cabinet, a good many of us, anxious to curtail our responsibility in that part of the world as much as we could, and filled with a desire, strongly recommended by Sir Robert Borden, to interest America in responsibilities in other parts of the world than the American Continent, felt disposed to urge that America should be made the custodian of Palestine. I believe I myself expressed a view in its favour. The more I think of it the more doubtful I am whether that is really a wise solution. I ask the Committee to contemplate the position of the Americans placed, as they would be if the French ambitions as regards Syria are fulfilled, midway between the French and ourselves. It would be a position that would almost certainly result in friction with both parties. Look at it again from the point of view of Palestine itself. I imagine that we have not conquered this country merely in order to recover it from the Crescent; we have conquered it in order that it may prosper and flourish under the Cross. If that is to be so, believe me, Palestine can only flourish and have any future before it if its interests—political, commercial, and otherwise—are considered in relation to the States that lie around it. You cannot treat Palestine as an insignificant little country—although it is nothing else really—which merely has to be kept from outside invasion; if you are to develop it you must develop it in connection with Syria in the north, Arabia on the east, and Egypt on the south. A further point. If you put the Americans into Palestine—the world will be difficult enough as it is—will you not open up the possibility of a good deal of friction between the Americans in Palestine and ourselves in Egypt? Remember the Americans have no experience of this sort of work or this kind of people. Their standards of administration, their methods of work, are entirely different from our own. Their method of handling Eastern people would be different from ours, and I suggest that the Americans in Palestine might be a source not of assistance but very much the reverse to ourselves in Egypt.

It follows from what I say that we ought to consider very carefully the alternative of Great Britain being invited to assume charge of Palestine, at any rate for a period, perhaps longer. The considerations that seem to me to point to this conclusion are these: In the first place, the commercial development of Palestine, upon which I laid stress just now, must really always proceed from, and be controlled by, the Egyptian factors in the case. The ports of Palestine itself are miserable; nothing very considerable could ever be made out of them. In the future, if Palestine is to have a future of prosperity, its trade will come, its imports and exports will move, from the direction of the Suez Canal. In the course of the war there has been developed a place

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on the Suez Canal named Kantara. From there the line runs, and there can be little doubt that in the future for movement by sea Kantara and not Jaffa or any other place will become the commercial port of Palestine. Secondly, I ask the Committee to consider the strategical point of view. Has not the whole history of the war shown us—I hesitate to speak upon it because it is a strategical point—that Palestine is really the strategical buffer of Egypt, and that the Canal, which is the weak side of Egypt, if it has to be defended in the future, will have to be defended—as it has been in this war—from the Palestine side? We were tempted into Palestine by our position upon the Canal and by the threat of a Turkish invasion that inevitably drew us forward upon the Canal, drew us across the Sinai Peninsula, and involved us in Palestine itself. Therefore, from the strategical point of view there is a close community of interest between Palestine and Egypt. Another consideration is this. Ought we not to try and keep the Arabs of Palestine in close touch with the Arabs of the country both to the east and to the north? If you, so to speak, segregate them under the charge of a separate Power which has no interest in those regions, you will really sterilize them and arrest their growth. On the other hand, our position and influence in the surrounding Arab areas must be always so great that the Arabs of Palestine would have, I think, a much better chance in our hands than in those of any others.

The final consideration is this, that, from all the evidence we have so far, the Arabs and Zionists in Palestine want us. The evidence on that point seems to be conclusive. Our most recent telegrams include two, in one of which the Zionists propose to General Clayton that Great Britain should assume a permanent tutelage over Palestine until both the Jews and the Arabs decide otherwise by decisive majorities. General Clayton, in his telegram* of the 21st November, proposed a form of declaration as follows: "That it is desirable at an early date to issue a declaration to the effect that the tutelage of Palestine shall continue until both Jews and Arabs in Palestine agree mutually that it should cease. Agreement would necessitate a majority of both Jews and Arabs respectively in favour of complete autonomy, and tutelage would continue if either party refused to agree." General Allenby agrees that a declaration in the above sense would have a good effect, provided it came from the *Entente* Powers. Obviously it is impossible that any such declaration should come from us. It might come at a later date from the Conference. The point I wish to put before the Committee is this, that when we go into the Conference we should for our part drop altogether the idea of international management of Palestine in the future, that we should make the best arrangement we can for its boundaries, and then, if it becomes a question of America and ourselves, believing in our own mind that it is best for the interests of the people of both parties that we and not America should be the Power, we should give every encouragement to this view I have put forward, namely, that under the principle of self-determination both the Zionists and the Arabs should be left to speak for themselves.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. I have very little to say. As far as our agreements are concerned, I do not read the Sykes-Picot Agreement myself as compelling us to advocate an international administration—I forget the exact phrase—but I think any administration under international control or direction would be met by ———

LORD CURZON: It is rather stronger than that. In the brown area "there shall be established an international administration."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The form of which is to be decided by ———

LORD CURZON: The other allies and the representatives of the Sherif.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That leaves the thing at large, and an international administration may mean anything, provided it is one internationally agreed upon. I think we are not in any difficulty about the agreements. As for the proper thing, I do not think there can be the least doubt that, from the point of view of the inhabitants, we should almost certainly do it better than anybody else, and therefore it would be better for us to do it. The French are entirely out of the question, for the reasons given by Lord Curzon, and also because the Italians would really burst if you suggested it—and the Greeks too. Therefore there is no question at all of the French, and it is entirely a question of the Americans or the British. I should be glad to see the British there. At the same time I should not like to rule out the Americans. There are advantages in having the Americans there. Upon the strategical aspect I do not

* E.C. 2443.

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express an opinion, but I am not much impressed by the argument that in order to defend Egypt we had to go to Palestine, because in order to defend Palestine we should have to go to Aleppo or some such place. You always have to go forward; at least, I gather so. You could not stand still in Palestine any more than you could anywhere else. As to that, I think our policy ought to be to say that, as far as we can do so decently, we think we are the best people to do it for the League of Nations, but that if they will not let us do it we would rather the Americans did it than anybody else. I do not believe the French will allow us to do it.

LORD CURZON: I do not feel at all clear that the Americans would be willing to do it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is a different matter. They may wish us to do it under the pressure of the Arabs and the Jews.

LORD CURZON: I think Republican sentiment, which is setting against the President, and will do so increasingly as the election draws near, is averse from a Democratic President drawing the country into foreign responsibilities, and if we talk of America taking over Palestine, the Caucasus, or Armenia ———

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They will not do the Caucasus and Armenia; they would be mad to do it, but there is an off-chance that they would take Constantinople or Palestine, one or the other, because of the great swagger of it. They might like the idea of it, and in a way they have a great interest in Palestine, of course. I do not think there is any great doubt what our policy should be. As to boundaries, I agree the boundaries, as put in the map, will not do, but I think that is a small matter, because all the boundaries will have to be settled by boundary commissions.

GENERAL WILSON: If we do think that we would be the best people there, I think we had better go there. It lies between us and the Americans.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is not going to be any great catch about it.

GENERAL WILSON: No.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Because we shall simply keep the peace between the Arabs and the Jews. We are not going to get anything out of it. Whoever goes there will have a poor time.

GENERAL SMUTS: It would affect Jewish national opinion, and nationally they are a great people.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They are likely to quarrel with the protecting Powers.

GENERAL WILSON: If well handled I do not think so.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I suggest the most important thing in the consideration of the position of Palestine is not its topographical relation to Syria or anything else, but its being, as Mr. Balfour says, the home of the Jewish people, and therefore interesting the whole of the Jews all over the world. I see a good many of the Zionists, and one suggested to me the day before yesterday that if the Jewish people did not get what they were asking for in Palestine we should have the whole of Jewry turning Bolsheviks and supporting Bolshevism in all the other countries as they have done in Russia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. I can conceive the Rothschilds leading a Bolshevist mob!

LORD CURZON: General Macdonogh, are you in favour of the general line of argument that I developed?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Certainly I am.

LORD CURZON: We have the remainder of the Caucasus to take up. We are going to resume Syria, so far as your paper bears upon it, General Wilson. When shall we do that?

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GENERAL WILSON: As soon as we can.

LORD CURZON: Yes. And, further, at a meeting of this Committee we ought to look into the future of Arabia, the Hejaz, &c., with a view to our policy there, because all sorts of fantastic suggestions are coming to us from all over the world that we should submit to the Peace Conference the treaty arrangements we already had before the war. I take the line that they have nothing whatever to do with the Peace Conference, and it would be fatal to start with the view that the Peace Conference is to settle the whole arrangements of Arabia, apart from the issues raised in the present war.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The Peace Conference has nothing to do with Arabia at all. They will have a certain amount to do with the turning out of the Turks. I suppose they will come in then.

LORD CURZON: I should like to be clear as to our Arabian policy. We shall meet again on Monday next at 3 o'clock.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 5, 1918.

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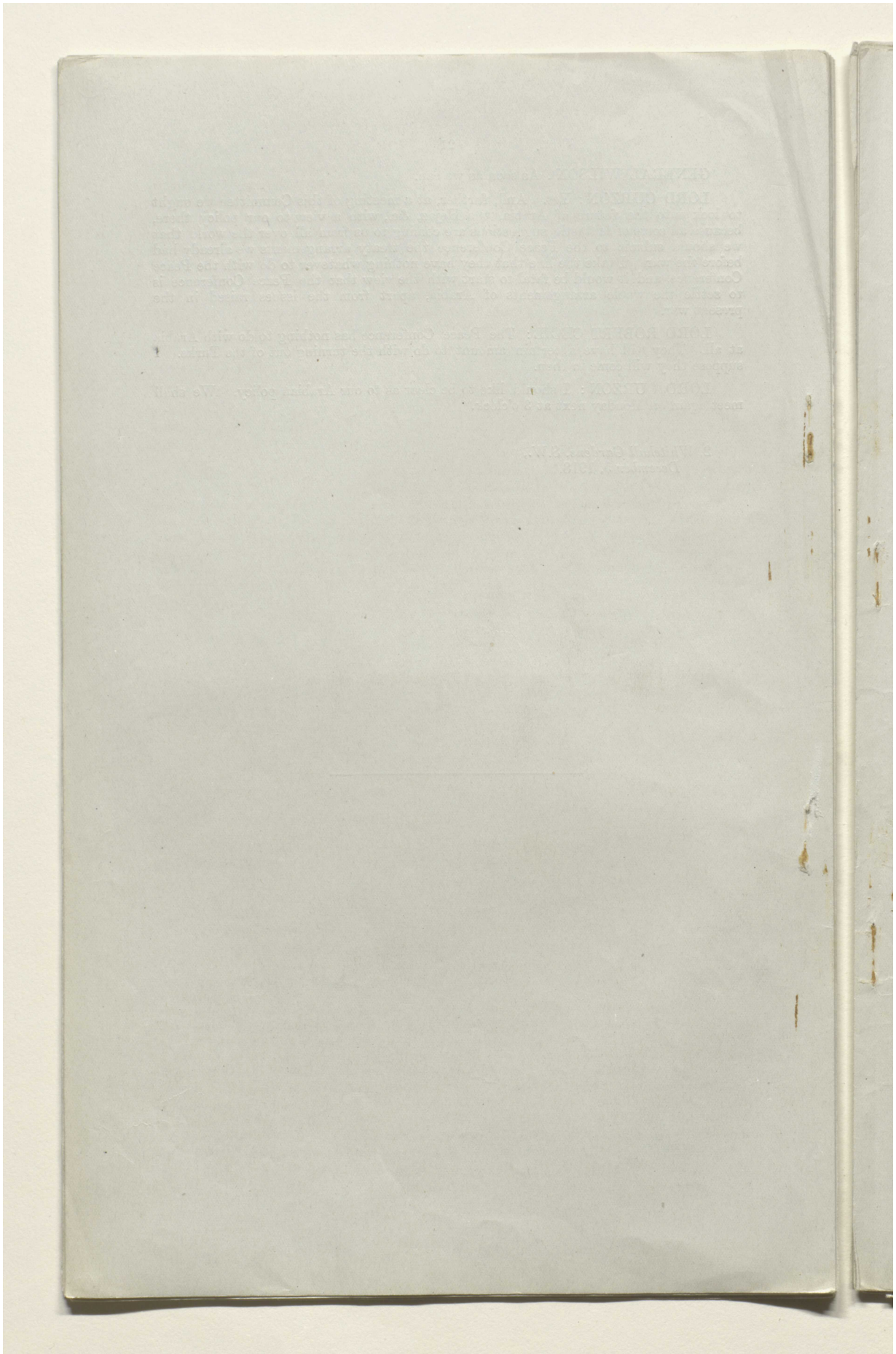

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Lord Curzon

(192)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 42nd Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 9, 1918, at 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieut.-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD R. CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The following also attended:

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR A. HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

Lieut.-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Lieut.-General Sir G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR (*Secretary*).

Armenia: American Relief.

1. WITH reference to the 40th Meeting (Minute 2), the Chairman said that the Committee had decided that the British Armenian Relief Fund should be utilised to assist the American Relief Mission to Armenia as far as possible. He enquired if anything had yet been done in this direction. The American vessel could not arrive for a considerable time, and, in the meantime, Armenians were dying in great numbers.

Lord Robert Cecil said that it was impossible for England to supply food, which must come from the United States. The utmost we could do was to send money and persons.

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The Committee decided :—

To instruct the Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to ascertain and report to the Committee what had been done in the matter.

Middle Eastern Questions: Caucasus and Armenia.

2. The Committee resumed the discussion, adjourned from the 40th Meeting, of the future of the Caucasian Regions and Armenia.

After a prolonged discussion, the full text of which is printed as an Annex to these Minutes,

The Committee decided : —

1. To invite the Chairman to draw up a series of draft propositions, embodying the results of the Meetings with regard to (i) Syria and Palestine; (ii) the Caucasus and Armenia, which, if necessary, could be discussed at a future meeting.
2. To meet again at the same hour and place on Monday, 16th instant, to discuss the Arabian question.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
December 9, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 9, 1918, at 3 P.M.

ARMENIAN RELIEF.

LORD CURZON : Before we proceed to our business this afternoon, I should like to ask one question. At our last meeting but one, when we discussed the question of Armenia and agreed to the despatch of an American vessel or vessels for the purpose of relief, a feeling was expressed that at the same time we should set in operation our Armenian Relief Fund here, in order to do what it could, more especially for the relief of the distressed Armenians in the southern areas affected, that is to say, Aleppo and the neighbourhood. Since then a number of telegrams have continued to come in pointing to the lamentable condition of the peoples in that area and the urgent need for relief. I would ask, before we proceed, whether anything has been done to stimulate the energies of our own people, because this is a matter of human life. We can see from the telegrams that thousands are in danger of perishing from week to week, or even from day to day, and it must be some time before any American vessel can arrive upon the scene from wherever it sails. Meanwhile, our responsibilities are very great. I do not know if anybody has charged himself with the duty of doing anything in the matter ?

SIR LOUIS MALLET : Sir Eyre Crowe has had the conclusions arrived at by this Committee.

(*Mr. Balfour entered.*)

LORD CURZON : Have you heard anything about it, Mr. Balfour ?

MR. BALFOUR : I have heard nothing about it, and I have never had anything to do with it at all. Some time ago, before the matter came before this Committee, I indicated that I thought we ought to encourage the Americans to go, although great objections were raised in some quarters. I have not done anything about our own Committee, which is new and quite out of my purview.

LORD CURZON : Your policy was practically adopted.

MR. BALFOUR : Yes, so I understand.

LORD CURZON : Meanwhile, telegrams continue to come in from General Clayton and others every day, and before the Americans can get there many of these people will have perished.

MR. BALFOUR : Are we in communication with the Relief Committee ?

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I think they are aware of the urgency of the matter. I understand their attitude was, and indeed it is imposed on them by the necessities of the situation, that there is not any food to send from here to Armenia ; and, therefore, it is really a question of what they can get from America. I think they were ready to supply a certain amount of money and a certain number of people to go and organise. This Committee decided that they should be entitled to do both, and I suppose that decision has been conveyed to them.

LORD CURZON : I raised the question with a view to seeing if any action was being taken. Perhaps the Foreign Office will make a note of it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Yes, we will ascertain what has been done.

ZIONISM.

MR. MONTAGU : May I say a word, as I was not present at the last meeting. There were two aspects of your deliberations at the last meeting in which I am interested. It seems to me useless, at this stage, to delay the Committee for a second on one of them, namely the continual references in the shorthand notes to a "Jewish people," a "Jewish nation," "the wishes of the Jews of the world." As the Committee knows, I deny that there is a Jewish nation or a Jewish people. The policy of His Majesty's Government is framed on the desires of a certain section of cosmopolitan Jews, largely, as I think, of German sympathies. I do not want to delay you to raise that question.

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MIDDLE EASTERN QUESTIONS WITH REFERENCE TO THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

The second question I want to raise is this. We are taking the whole field of this Committee in geographical sections; Mesopotamia first, the Caucasus and Armenia second, Syria and Palestine after, and we treat each area, as it seems to me, according to the almost irrefutable and unanswerable arguments addressed to us by our Chairman. With the assent of the Committee we seem to be drifting into the position that right from the east to the west there is only one possible solution of all our difficulties, namely, that Great Britain should accept responsibility for all these countries. For some reason, France is objectionable *here*; for other reasons, America is objectionable *there*, and the only solution is that we should be the tutelary Power, the protecting Power, or whatever the adjective is, although we are agreed that there should be no annexation. I am a little alarmed—I do not know whether it is avoidable—at the possible relationship with our American associates over a situation which I cannot help thinking they will view with some suspicion. I was wondering if, when when we have completed the investigation of each area, we shall have an opportunity of surveying our recommendations as a whole and see if we cannot approach our Allies in a sustainable position, or whether we shall not find ourselves in a position in which we have firmly convinced ourselves that all alternatives are objectionable, and that unfortunately, against our will, British responsibilities, with their concomitant military responsibilities, have got to be increased to embrace the whole areas discussed by this Committee. I do not know whether anyone has said anything as to this danger, but I think it ought to be present to our mind.

LORD CURZON: I do not think anybody has put it as clearly as that. Mr. Montagu has, I think, a little exaggerated the situation, because, so far from claiming it as our desire to become the mandatory or tutelary Power of these regions, in some cases we cannot possibly escape it, and as to others, we have gone so far as to say that we would gladly accept any foreign Power of the first order, so long as we are not ourselves involved and thus incur the very suspicions which Mr. Montagu fears. For instance, when we discussed Armenia and Caucasia, a very strong feeling was expressed here that it would be well, both on grounds of broad policy and also on the narrow ground of expediency, to interest France in Armenia. I think at the present moment the proposition is that these tutelary powers should be exercised by France in the case of Armenia, and preference was expressed at this table for a larger rather than a smaller Armenia to be handed over to France. Then when we come to the Caucasus, it was only by what Mr. Montagu calls the irrefutable processes of logic that we gradually came to the conclusion that, willing as we were to take France, and even more so America, the larger political and strategical considerations to which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff has drawn attention must drive us to another conclusion. Even if we do arrive at that conclusion, surely behind it all lies the double protection, first, of the principle of self-determination upon which we have relied and upon which we are quite content to rely; secondly, the possibility of a League of Nations which should itself ask us to act as the mandatory. Therefore, so far from contemplating that we should appear at the Peace Conference, or anywhere, with proposals that Great Britain should do this or that, I think, on the contrary, that we ought to start in the other way and trust to the inevitable process of events and the unanswerable logic of the situation to prove that, in the last resort, we shall be bound to assume certain responsibilities. As regards the question with which Mr. Montagu concluded, and which I thought a very fair one, when we have gone through all these countries I hope we shall then have a meeting and see the position into which we are drifting, and measure the degrees of responsibility which, even if we are not intentionally assuming it, may be forced upon us, and come to a definite conclusion as to whether or not the burden is really too heavy. I quite agree to that, and when we have gone through all the subjects we will have regard to the point Mr. Montagu has raised.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I add a word? If the objects of General Smuts materialise, and I hope they will, the League of Nations will not only be the dominant factor in all these situations, but it will probably lay down as a principle that no occupation of any of these countries must be of advantage to the occupying country. When I say "occupation" I mean to include all the minor degrees of "sphere of influence," and so on. The "open door" will have to be an essential principle of all countries under the control of the League of Nations. If that is established, I doubt if France will be so keen as she was.

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LORD CURZON: Is there not a further point: that these occupations and the exercise of these mandatory powers will be—as I, at any rate, hope they will be—provisional in character? The period of tutelage may be short or long according to the circumstances of the case, but I certainly hope we shall not go into any of these countries with the settled principle of remaining there for all time. It would break us down.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Of course the control of the Trans-Caucasian countries is going to be perfectly awful. Nobody will want to do more of it than they can possibly avoid.

THE CAUCASUS AND ARMENIA.

LORD CURZON: At our two last meetings we discussed the Caucasus and Armenia at the first, Syria and Palestine at the second, and although we discovered a good deal of common ground I do not think that we were quite in unison as to the results, nor did we arrive at any definite decisions. We refrained from doing so partly because we had not had time fully to make up our minds, and partly because I understood the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was going to address us on the strategical aspect of both cases. He has done so, and we have this very powerful and valuable paper* about Trans-Caucasia which we received on Saturday, and we have a shorter paper upon Syria which reached me this morning. Perhaps we may follow our former order of procedure, and take the Caucasus first.

The main points about General Wilson's paper are these. He argues, and, I think, demonstrates with great force, that the military and, ultimately, the political danger to our position in the Far East of setting up France as a great Power occupying a huge block of territory and exercising political influence from the eastern corner of the Levant right up to the Caucasus might be very considerable and one which we should be slow to encourage or accept. Secondly, General Wilson argues—and this point is new; I do not think we raised it in our discussion the other day, but again I think the point is almost unanswerable—that we should, in our dealings with these various Trans-Caucasian States, as far as possible provide for the separation of Russian Armenia from Turkish Armenia, both because of the difference between the aims and aspirations of the two sets of people, and also because, if Turkish Armenia be given to the French, the addition of Russian Armenia to that block would add considerably to the strategical danger which he has pointed out.

GENERAL SMUTS: Which is Russian Armenia?

LORD CURZON: The capital is Erivan, south of the Caucasian Railway, and it includes Kars and other places. It is a block of territory contiguous to, but not identical with, Turkish Armenia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Is there a distinction between Turkish Armenia and Russian Armenia? I know of no distinction between them.

LORD CURZON: It turns largely on the populations by which they are surrounded.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is a different proposition. I mean as far as they are themselves concerned. The Sykes-Picot Agreement shows the position best. *This* is Turkish Armenia, and *this* is Russian Armenia.

LORD CURZON: I am using the words in a different sense. By "Russian Armenia" you refer to the three vilayets which it was proposed to hand over to Russia. I do not mean that in the least. Russian Armenia is a quite separate area more to the east.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Oh, no, not as indicated in General Wilson's paper.

LORD CURZON: Yes, I think that is so. Am I right, General Wilson?

GENERAL WILSON: Yes.

LORD CURZON: You allude to the small area round Kars and Erivan.

GENERAL WILSON: Yes. Map 2 shows it better.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like to ask, do you contemplate a separate State of this little bit, the Kars and the Erivan bit?

LORD CURZON: It has been set up already. What the geographical limits are I do not know, but there is in existence a Russian Armenian State.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Is it a thing which has been set up by one of the treaties?

* E.C. 2632.

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LORD CURZON: No, it has been set up since May, 1918, and it is one of the four bodies in the Caucasus now appealing for recognition. The four are Georgia, Daghestan, Azerbaijan, and Russian Armenia. The Russian Armenians are functioning at this moment at Erivan. But I do not know that we can go into the boundaries now.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, but it is rather important.

GENERAL SMUTS: We must be clear about this. We know what Georgia is, and the others, but this nondescript area we must be certain about.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Georgia and Daghestan are easy to understand; they have a real existence, but this thing has been brought into existence during the war and had no existence prior to the war of any sort or kind. It is not only that they had no existence formerly, but there was no semi-autonomy under the Russians, or anything of that kind. It was just a part of Russia, like any other part.

LORD CURZON: It might equally be said that Turkish Armenia was not separate, but was under the Turk.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It was a part of the Trans-Caucasian Government. There was no suggestion, so far as it had any State-consciousness, that it was a part of Armenia.

LORD CURZON: One of the chief reasons, apart from the strategical grounds expounded by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, for suggesting the political independence of this region is that the Armenians inhabiting it have great interests in Baku. Many of them are the principal owners of the oil wells there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I hesitate to question anything, but I think that the Armenians in all parts of the world have interests in Baku, have they not? I do not think the people who live in Erivan have.

LORD CURZON: Sir Louis Mallet will tell you.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: This is what Mr. Stevens says about the Armenians. He says they are likely to unite with the Turks, but it is not certain that they would now. They have great interests in Georgia and Baku.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should have thought it would be almost hopeless, in the present condition of affairs, to go to the Peace Conference and say you propose to have an Armenia which contains a very small minority of Armenians, and that you propose to exclude from Armenia the one district which probably has a majority of Armenians.

LORD CURZON: I do not know about the exact proportions of the population, but would not a great deal turn upon what are the feelings of the people themselves?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think, as Stevens says, they will probably wish to join with the rest of the Armenians.

LORD CURZON: No, far from it. I think it is the other way. Their stake is in Baku, and I believe that they would view with dismay being joined to the six vilayets under France or whoever is the tutelary Power. But are we wise in discussing these details to-day?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is a matter for you. You say you feel quite satisfied with everything in the General Staff paper. I am not satisfied myself with that part of it, at any rate. I cannot conceive that you would gain anything from any point of view whatever, if you look at the map, by cutting that bit off from Armenia and making it separate. It does not seem to me to add anything to the strength of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan.

MR. BALFOUR: It would prevent the French, in control of Cilician Armenia, as I will call it, from having access to the Caspian Sea.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, it would not, with great respect. Azerbaijan is the substantial barrier.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes, and it doubles that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I adds a bit to it, but on the other hand you have immediately an Armenia Irredenta.

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LORD CURZON: But do you? It all depends upon what is the attitude of the Armenians themselves. Sir Louis Mallet has shown to me the notes of his conversation with Stevens, who has been between 20 and 30 years our consul in that part of the world—I met him at Batum myself 30 years ago—and with Mr. Tweed, who has been for some years in charge of one of the oil companies at Baku.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: He is not there now.

LORD CURZON: I have made a note of what Stevens says. He says it is very doubtful if the Russian Armenians, many of whom are interested in Baku and the oil wells, and who also have substantial interests at Tiflis, will wish to join with their Turkish brethren across the frontier. I presume he speaks with authority.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: But he does not say they would not.

LORD CURZON: No; neither can we say that they will. After all, we have to rely upon our witnesses.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: His proposition is this. "With regard to the Armenians Mr. Stevens is still uncertain how far the Russian Armenians are even yet prepared to be united with their Turkish compatriots. He states that the district of Akhalsikh, in the province of Tiflis, has a larger Armenian population than that of Georgians and Tartars combined, and should, on that account, be Armenian." The Turkish Armenians would favour an American or French occupation. The whole grouping of the Armenian population is, however, at present in a state of flux; for example, numbers which he estimated at tens of thousands had gone to Nakhitchevan in the Don territory to be safe from the Turks.

LORD CURZON: I did not contemplate to-day that we should formally settle whether we are or are not to play for an independent Russian Armenia. I am not competent to advise about that, and perhaps none of us here is competent to do so. What I was about to submit was this: We had a long discussion the other day which did not terminate in any decision. We have now had a paper by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff laying great stress on one, or more than one, aspect of the case. Before I came here I endeavoured roughly to draw up a number of propositions which I thought of submitting to the committee in order to see if they were in general agreement. I thought that would save us the necessity of having the whole discussion over again. I wanted to do that with regard to Armenia and the Caucasus first, then to do the same with Syria, and then to get on to the main topic of our conversation this afternoon, namely, the Hejaz and Arabia. If you will allow me to read out the propositions which I have roughly drawn up, you can then object to any one of them as they come. I think it will be an advantage to the Foreign Office when they go to Paris—and this is the whole purpose of our meeting here—to have the discussions summed up in a form so as to have something like agreement, if possible. The propositions which I have ventured to frame are the following. They are very hurried, and are subject to alteration at any point or any stage: Firstly, that it is desirable to encourage and foster the political independence of the Trans-Caucasian States, namely, Georgia, Russian Armenia (subject to further consideration), Daghestan, and Azerbaijan. As regards the two latter, I gather from the evidence put before the Foreign Office that it is not unlikely that the Daghestanis—who are Moslems and non-Christians, and may ultimately find themselves isolated and feeble—will wish to join a Tartar State in Azerbaijan, should such be called into existence. All I am now asking is that general adhesion should be given to the principle that our policy is, as far as possible, to encourage the independence of these rising nationalities.

MR. BALFOUR: As against Russia?

LORD CURZON: I meant as against anybody. We have no designs on their independence, and I do not think anybody else has. We favour their desire to set up, create, and establish autonomous existence.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Of course we should all agree to that, I should imagine, but the difficulty really is who is to be the protecting Power. None of these States will be able to stand alone at first.

LORD CURZON: I am coming to that later. This is merely a general proposition by way of opening. Then No. 2. That of these States Georgia is the most advanced, and may be entitled to the earliest recognition, but that the recognition of the remaining States would be premature at the present stage. 3. That in the settlement

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to be arrived at at the Peace Conference, it is probable that one of the Great Powers may be appointed the provisional tutelar Power of this region. 4. That it is undesirable on broad grounds of policy and strategy that that Power should be France. 5. That the United States may be invited, but appears unlikely to undertake, and should not be encouraged to undertake, responsibilities for the Caucasus. All this, of course, is merely thrown out very generally. Then 6. That if there be a mandatory Power, subject to the invitation of the States concerned, or of the League of Nations, it should preferably be Great Britain. 7. That pending the creation of a stable Government or Governments in these regions, a temporary military occupation may be found necessary. 8. That inasmuch as this force is already provided by the British, and as the Caucasus falls, in the scheme of partition laid down in the Anglo-French Agreement of December 1917, into the British sphere, it should continue to be provided by them. 9. That the British Government should also retain for the present the naval control of the Caspian. 10. That the ultimate settlement should provide for the declaration as free ports of Batum, Poti, Trebizond, Baku, and for free transit on the railway from Batum to Baku. 11. That if a Tartar Republic be recognised in the Eastern Caucasus, special steps may require to be taken for the administration of Baku. 12. That it is desirable —and here is the disputable proposition—to retain the separate political existence of Russian, as distinguished from Turkish, Armenia. 13. That in the reconstitution of Georgia it is desirable to include within its boundaries the Moslem Georgians of Batum and of Lazistan. That is a point that comes out very strongly in the reports of Stevens and others, that although the inhabitants of Batum are Moslems by religion, having been forcibly converted some centuries ago, they are Georgian in race. The same applies to the strip along the southern coast of the Black Sea, in which Trebizond lies, which, as I pointed out, is not an Armenian vilayet at all—indeed the Armenians are in a decided minority—but is inhabited by a Moslem population, and has, until the collapse of the last few months, been under Turkish rule, but is inhabited by people of Georgian race. Then 14. That it is desirable that the mandatory Power for Armenia should be either France or the United States of America—by "Armenia" I mean Armenia exclusive of the reservations I have made—and that Great Britain should put forward no claims for this position. That is merely a rough summary.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Before we assent to the broad lines of this settlement, let us consider. I confess that it seems to me to be a very doubtful advantage. We are going to say that France—because I think we may rule out America, much as I should like to see her there——

LORD CURZON: Which point are you discussing?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The whole of the settlement. Take for the moment the whole settlement. We propose that the six vilayets should be an Armenia, and that it should be under the protection of either France or America. If it is under the protection of America, then very grave difficulties arise elsewhere, but I will not deal with that point, because I want to take the hypothesis that it becomes French. Then you are going to have a French Armenia. The General Staff says, as I understand, that the French, with their military talents, will be able to raise, if they like, a very important force from Anatolia and Armenia itself, and may become quite a formidable military force there. Then it is suggested that Georgia and Daghestan should be independent—we are all agreed as to that—but that they should be under our control and protection: that is to say, we shall be chargeable with the defence of Georgia and Daghestan if there is any attack made upon them. What that means is this, that we have to keep a very considerable force ready to protect Georgia and Daghestan against any attack from the French, which, by hypothesis, may be a very serious matter. We shall have a perpetual friction there. However you settle the boundaries there will be the greatest possible indignation that more has not been included in one or the other, and I thought it was one of the main propositions laid down by Lord Curzon last week—to which I thought we agreed—that whoever had Armenia must have these Caucasian districts, for the very reason that the burden of defending them would be so terrific. If we only had that little strip which we could only approach from the Black Sea it would be the only way we could get at it, and for us to undertake to defend that against a formidable military attack on the Armenians would be a very serious matter, besides being difficult to defend. That seems to me to be a very doubtful proposition. It may be right, but I should have thought that it was wrong myself. The Georgians and Daghestanis are going to be a troublesome body, I agree, but I do not myself quite see our being made responsible

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tor their defence, because that is the whole basis of the General Staff paper, a regenerated Russia on the north and a militarised Armenia on the south. I think it would be an appalling position to be put into, and I cannot conceive what the real reason for it is. We say this is part of the route to India. So it is. The railway from Batum to Baku is a very important link in that particular route to India. If we have the control of the Black Sea that is all right, and nobody can go to Batum without our leave. If we have not, then we evidently cannot defend Georgia at all. If we have got the control of the Caspian, which I think we ought to retain, and also cut off that route a little farther on, it seems to me our proper course is to abide by our traditional policy, to go in for supremacy on the sea in the Black Sea and the Caspian, and let anybody who likes have the intervening bit of land, which does not matter to us at all. That seems to be what we have thought from a political point of view. The difficulty appears to be very great if we ask for Georgia, Daghestan, and Azerbaijan. That is a perfectly new demand which we have never made, and it will greatly hamper any possible solution of the very difficult questions that are going to arise in the Arab countries, which we all know of and to which I need not refer.

LORD CURZON : I do not argue the military side of the case ; the Chief of the Imperial General Staff will do that. I am putting in a *caveat* against your interpretation, or rather misinterpretation, of what I meant. In the first place you say again that you deprecate our making such a demand. I did not anticipate that any demand would come from us at all. Rather, I anticipated that the line would be this, that, however reluctant, we might be made to act in these regions. If we were to assume this *rôle* in the Caucasian regions north and south of the railway, and were to take over the responsibility of protecting these regions for all time against a possible attack by hostile forces in French Armenia, things would be very different. But that is not the proposition. In the Caucasus you have a good deal of ferment and unrest, and you have these small communities struggling into existence. It is tolerably clear that they cannot establish their autonomous life by themselves. Military occupation is for the time being in existence, and it must for some time be necessary. I do not know whether you contemplate that our military forces there should be reinforced or replaced by the forces of other Powers. Indeed, I think that the other day, when I or somebody suggested a joint military occupation, you or some other speaker pointed out the disadvantages. Let us assume, therefore, that the garrison, being required for a time, is provided by ourselves. I assume that that garrison will probably require to remain in occupation of the line from Batum to Baku, and possibly of the two capitals at either end, and of Tiflis in the centre, for a period of time—how long I cannot say, whether one or more years. I should have thought that in their own interests this would have been demanded by the people themselves. Meanwhile, these States having asked for a mandatory, on my hypothesis, and having chosen us as the mandatory, for they are at liberty to do so, if we are willing to take it, they will be organising their strength and the development of their national existence. In a few years' time they will either be strong enough to stand by themselves, as I hope and believe they will be, or else, on the hypothesis that Russia recovers in the interval, they might go back to Russia. Therefore the idea that we are to assume indefinite military responsibility is not one which entered my head, and I entirely repudiate it. I do not contemplate a state of affairs in which we, with inferior forces in the Caucasus, thousands of miles from our base, should be confronted by a great military force raised by the French in Armenia which will come into collision with us.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I do not understand the purpose of going there at all. The whole theory of the General Staff paper, as I understand, is that there may be a danger of a French occupation of this district. If that is not the theory then I do not understand it. That is the whole theory, and if that danger is to exist we must be there to stop it, and that is the whole purpose of our being there. I do not understand what the point is otherwise.

LORD CURZON : The military theory is this, although it is not for me to expound it in the presence of General Wilson. France will acquire considerable strength and momentum by being in Armenia, and that strength and momentum will increase to our detriment if they have the manhood, the resources, and the railways of the Caucasus in addition.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : They will never get that.

LORD CURZON : Why ?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: That means that Georgia and Daghestan will be easily dominated by the French forces, which would mean 150,000 men.

LORD CURZON: I do not think, because the Russians kept 150,000 men there, that you must assume the same conditions will continue. I thought General Wilson's idea was this: He would not like to see a French Armenia at all, but even if he does, he has no desire to have the Caucasian region added as well, because he sees reared up against us in the future what may be a very formidable military menace. Is not that right?

GENERAL WILSON: Yes. Lord Curzon has stated my view exactly on that side of it. I do not particularly want to get our troops there, and certainly not for any length of time. I should like to see the four States put on their feet, and let the French stop at Turkish Armenia. Lord Robert says, and I quite agree, that we ought to fly the White Ensign on the Caspian, but you cannot do that—as I imagine the Admiralty would say—without having your ports. If you lose the Caucasus, that is to say, if it passes into French hands and then into hostile hands, as it may do, you certainly cannot fly your White Ensign in the Caspian. However, that is a question for the Admiralty.

ADMIRAL HOPE: I agree with what you have said.

GENERAL WILSON: This is only a temporary measure, and if you can suggest anything better by all means let us have it. The only alternative, I understand, is that the French should sweep on further towards Baku, in the way we propose to do with Georgia or with Daghestan.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I propose to make them all independent; I think they ought all to be independent. That is clear.

GENERAL WILSON: In order to get them on their feet they will want a helping hand, and who is going to do that?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Let the French do it.

GENERAL WILSON: Would you say that with regard to Georgia and the Caspian?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Even so, I would still say let the French have it. I think the Black Sea is the important point to us.

GENERAL WILSON: You are going to internationalise that, I suppose?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

GENERAL WILSON: The moment anything happens you will be forbidden to pass up it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That does not matter. It will cut the whole thing off.

MR. BALFOUR: Is that your view of internationalisation? It is an open point, but it is not as I conceive it. I thought you always could go up. That is my idea of internationalisation.

MR. MONTAGU: Do I understand your suggestion to be that we should stay in these provinces with our military occupation so long that we should only go when they are ready to stand on their own legs, and there is no fear of the French taking possession?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should be sorry for the Minister who had to defend that in the House of Commons.

MR. MONTAGU: That is my difficulty. Lord Curzon and you are both animated by the desire to keep the French out, but you both say the proposed arrangement is only temporary, so long as there is any danger of the French coming in, because of the weakness of the States.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Forty years ago there was the same idea in Egypt, but we had to end by assuming the administration.

LORD CURZON: In Egypt, all the while we have been, first with the French and afterwards by ourselves, administering the country. The condominium broke down, and only then did we have to take it over.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: We did not go in to administer the country. Lord Cromer never had any position there at all; he was merely the adviser of the Egyptian Government. Gradually he had to take over the administration because they were so incompetent, and the same thing will happen again in Georgia and elsewhere.

LORD CURZON: As to the Georgians, or indeed any of these States, that is not my idea at all. Mr. Montagu has spoken as if I contemplated a formidable and prolonged military occupation. Let us look at things as they are. You have opened up the Black Sea route to Batum; you have sent a division to Batum, and you are going to send another if it is wanted; you have forces at the present moment at Baku; you will have presently, if you have not already, forces at Tiflis. When do you propose to take them away? Do you think you will be able to take them away in one, two, three, or six months? Nothing of the sort. You will not be able to. You will have to keep them there for a period of time.

MR. MONTAGU: I do not think you will be allowed to take them away.

LORD CURZON: I should take them away as soon as I could. But I think the people will say "While we are setting up these States of our own we shall want a certain number of troops."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Two divisions, and in another ten years they will want three.

LORD CURZON: Stevens, who is rather a Jingo in the matter, says the total number of troops, under his extreme hypothesis, to hold the line would be 10,000.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We were told that we could occupy Siberia with 20,000.

GENERAL WILSON: What is the meaning of this, which was signed by Lord Robert Cecil in December 1917: "The English zone was the Cossack territory, the territories of the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, Kurdistan. The French zone was Bessarabia, the Ukraine, the Crimea"?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The meaning of it is simple. The question was, who was to assist the various Russian loyalist forces in the south of Russia. There was a great danger that the French were sending money to one set of people and we were sending money at the same time, and we said that we must have a division. Therefore the convenient division was that we should take *these* parts, which were more easy for us to get at, and *those* parts more easy for the French. If that was the point, if we were in a position to offer the Ukraine to France, there would be a great deal in that policy still. But if we are to take the whole of the Caucasus areas, that would be a profound imperialistic policy, and is quite out of the question now.

MR. MONTAGU: You were then dealing with war conditions.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, merely for the purpose of assisting the various elements we were then assisting against the Bolshevik elements. It was merely to keep up the Eastern front.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Is not the question this: What is the value of Caucasia to us? Do we or do we not want it? Is it an important link of the communication with India, or is it not? Would we be willing to see any foreign Power there except the natives? Lord Robert Cecil suggests that the French are not going to raise a great army of natives and then attack Georgia. I do not know if they will or not; perhaps they will. If that should happen, why would the French be attacking Georgia and Azerbaijan? With only one object—to get to the Caspian. And surely, if you have the French coming out of these six vilayets and attempting to strike at the Caspian, we should have to be prepared in any case, whether occupying Georgia or not, to resist them, for it would simply mean that they were attacking our communications with India.

LORD CURZON: In this controversy, which side do you take?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I entirely agree with the General Staff and with yourself in thinking that the mandatory Power ought to be Great Britain in the case of the Caucasus.

MR. BALFOUR: I am against a mandatory Power, and against Great Britain taking it, although we may be driven to it. It would be a most serious thing. I am

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much alarmed at our having sent a division there. It may be necessary, but I was never consulted about it. I was rather shocked when I heard it, and am still. I think you are going to find it a great military burden. I cannot get a platoon for places much nearer home because there are no troops to give, and then I find that troops are being sent to the furthest parts of the world. Putting that out of account, I believe the very suggestion that Great Britain is for an indefinite time—which we will announce to the Conference we hope will be short, but which we do not limit—intending to occupy militarily the road to the oilfields of Baku—there are plenty of other things to say about it—is damning and settles the question.

LORD CURZON: Why should it shock the Peace Conference that we should do it rather than the French?

MR. BALFOUR: I would not give it to the French or to either. You must not allow these little people to be crushed by the Russians, if you mean to set them up, which we ought to do. Although that has been assumed rather boldly by this Committee, I am in favour of it, so I do not quarrel about that. But from the way we are treating the outskirts of Russia, we are going to have trouble about it. I would not allow these people to be attacked from the outside by any big Powers, and I would exercise through the League of Nations a controlling influence which would prevent them carrying their squabbles and their frontier fights beyond a certain point. For myself I think they will settle down.

LORD CURZON: How would you prevent them from being crushed by Russia unless you had a military force?

MR. BALFOUR: If Russia is in a position to crush them, why not? We should not go there to protect them from the Russians. It would be folly, from a purely military point of view, for us to try and keep a military force there.

LORD CURZON: I do not want to protect them against anybody; I want to give them a chance of standing on their own feet.

MR. BALFOUR: Who is going to knock them down except themselves?

LORD CURZON: No one, I hope. They want order in the country, and the ports of Batum and Baku will not be able to function in the ordinary way until order is re-established. If you read the papers, you will see that they have not the organisation or the strength at the present moment to do it. I believe that they will ask that some force, either an international force, or at any rate the force of some great Great Power, should remain for the time being to help them. We are on the spot, and I think we shall be asked to do it.

MR. BALFOUR: If we are asked seriously to do it, and being honestly reluctant, if it is pressed upon us I think we ought to say to the Conference that it is very inconvenient, and say genuinely that it is, and will be, a burden upon our limited military resources, but we will look into it. I would not take the trouble to come to a decision on it until we are honestly pressed by these people. I am dreadfully afraid, in spite of Lord Curzon's disclaimer, that if we say, "Oh, well, of course we will do this; we do not want to do it, but here we are ready to do it if you press us," that that attitude will be fatal. It must be quite genuine and serious reluctance, which on examination would not be got over. Leaving that point, which is an international point, when we come to the point of the defence of India, I hope the General Staff will be a little careful about the demands they make upon us about India. Every time I come to a discussion—at intervals of, say, five years—I find there is a new sphere which we have got to guard, which is supposed to protect the gateways of India. Those gateways are getting further and further from India, and I do not know how far west they are going to be brought by the General Staff. Remember, before the war there was really a great military Power in occupation of these places, not a military Power, separated as the French would be, by the whole vulnerable length of the Mediterranean lying adjacent to her shores, and open to intolerable pressure from us of the naval kind. It was a great military Power which we could not hit, which we of all people were helpless against. They had it and we did not tremble. We were rather anxious about India, and always have been. India has always been a point which you have only to mention, and the General Staff begin to show, quite rightly, signs of anxiety. But what was our anxiety about India ten years ago? It was the Mesopotamia line, the Baghdad line, and the Persian Gulf. That frightened them out of their wits. We have stopped that, and the terrors excited by Mesopotamia are now excited by Trans-

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Caucasia, which is far safer now, from the Indian point of view, than it ever was, because it is either going to be occupied by the French, whom I think we can manage, or by these little nations themselves. It is not going to be occupied by Russia, which was the military Power you had to fear. I would not commit this country to military action under necessities which have not yet arisen, and which I most earnestly trust never will arise.

LORD CURZON: May I break a lance on behalf of the military authorities, with regard to your strictures in the case of India? You will remember very well that when the Anglo-Russian Agreement about Persia was being drawn up, the military necessities of India were drawn so narrow that when it came to a question of the division of Persia into zones, on Lord Kitchener's advice the military zone required for the protection of India was limited to a little strip on the east of Persia, from the Afghan border on the north to the Gulf in the south. Lord Kitchener said: "Do not take more than that; it is all that is required for the defence of India." The result of this war has proved that he was absolutely wrong, and that the defence of India, so far from being confined to that narrow corner, has spread out to Hamadan, Tehran, Resht, and right away to Baku. We have been holding the line of Hamadan to the Caspian not in the least from any desire of our own—you will bear me out that I struggled against it as much as anyone—but it was imposed upon us in the interests of India's defence. Perhaps this is rather an academic point to take, but I can well conceive that just as the defence of India has driven us forward in this war to the line from Hamadan to the Caspian, so in the future it may do the same with the Caucasus. Unintentionally, no doubt, are you not rather misrepresenting the views of the General Staff by the expressions you have used? I loathe the idea of permanent military occupation of the Caucasus. I cannot contemplate it, because we have not the men to do it. I am anxious to set up a new condition of affairs in that part of the country, and to give the people a chance. We are there for the time being, and we may be asked to stay on. I contemplate this, that when we go to the Peace Conference, the future of all these countries will be under examination. If the position of the League of Nations is to be assured, the Powers will very likely be called upon to say, "Here are all these national communities; the world is in commotion, and if affairs are to settle down the Great Powers must be put in charge here and there." They may say, "France, will you take charge of Armenia? America, will you take charge of Constantinople, or whatever it may be? Next comes the Caucasus: who is to look after the Caucasus?" I think by the process of exhaustion, if by no other means, it must come to us, because nobody else has any interest there in the future, unless it be an aggressive interest. In the last resort they they will come and say, "You are already there; we want you to stay; take charge of these people, and set them on their legs." I do not think anything will alter the fact that somebody must be there; and, if so, I do not see why we should wring our hands, our interests being so closely involved, and propose anybody but ourselves. Are we so unsuspicious that we are prepared to let the French, the most imperialistic people in world——

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is not the point at all. The real point we can see from the map, although it does not include the whole of it. We have got to take over the whole of the Arab bit of country (Areas A and B) undoubtedly. The argument will be, we have struggled against it and tried to see whether we could get out of it. We have got to take the whole of the Arab country, and the whole of Arabia. We have a very awkward political situation, as is known, in connection with our agreements with France. If we can say, "Very well, France can have Armenia, and, as far as we are concerned, she can have the Caucasus Republics," they are not much catch. She can be mandatory if she desires it, she can be put in charge of the Caucasus.

MR. BALFOUR: Why should there be a mandatory?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am assuming Lord Curzon's point that there must be.

MR. BALFOUR: He may be right, I quite agree, though I am not prepared to admit it without argument. Of course the Caucasus would be much better governed under our ægis than it would be under French ægis. But why should it not be misgoverned?

LORD CURZON: That is the other alternative—let them cut each other's throats.

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MR. BALFOUR: I am in favour of that.

MR. MONTAGU: Lord Curzon has spoken of Armenia and Caucasus, but if he adds Arabia, Mesopotamia, and possibly Persia, that makes it all the worse. This is the extraordinary part of it, that there is always some reason in all these countries—and particularly where there is oil—why, unfortunately for us, there is nobody else that can do it. The real reason why it is so necessary that it should be us is this strategical danger to India. I should like to ask the General Staff, in pursuance of what Mr. Balfour has said, what is the strategical danger to India supposing the worst came to the worst. Supposing these people are not ready to misgovern themselves, supposing we do not wish to go there, and supposing the French go there, what is the danger of their holding it? Assuming they have the strip of country from Armenia stretching across to Baku, and assuming we keep command of the sea and have the chance of doing anything we like in the Mediterranean, what is the actual danger of a French occupation of that, from a military point of view?

GENERAL WILSON: As a hostile country?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes.

GENERAL WILSON: As far as I know, this country in times of peace will never keep a force of any size either in or outside of it. What Mr. Balfour has said about India is true. It did not hurt the people of the country very much, although it meant that their money was reduced, and the number of troops was reduced too. Whether that was wise or not is another thing, but we certainly will not keep any force either in India or in Mesopotamia worth talking about. A hostile Power to stretch from Alexandretta to Batum and to take in, as they could, the Caspian and Enzeli, would ruin Mesopotamia to a great extent. I do not know what the Admiralty would say about the oil. I understand from the Admiralty papers which I have read that it is their view that the oil of Mesopotamia is going to be as important in the future as the Welsh coalfields have been in the past. Do not think for a moment that you would reduce your dangers, and therefore the number of troops you must keep, by bringing the danger nearer to India. My opinion is, if we could go into these four countries, keep them friendly (as I dare say we could) and then withdraw, that would be the perfect thing to work for. Whether such a thing is possible I cannot tell. I do not think anybody can tell what is going to be possible in the future. If that is the best arrangement, as I think it is, it is the one we ought to work for.

LORD CURZON: Mr. Montagu, there is one small point. You ask why should England do this? Why should Great Britain push herself out in these directions? Of course, the answer is obvious—India. You may say we are going too far, but your remedy is that others should be allowed to go farther. I put it to you, why should the Caucasus be given to France? France has no interest, except a sentimental or a chauvinistic one, in those parts of the world. She is going, as the result of a campaign to which she only contributed 1,000 black men—"niggers," as the Prime Minister called them—to get the greater part of the coast of Syria and the Lebanon. She must be given Armenia, because nobody else wants to have anything to do with that singularly unattractive people! Having got her into Armenia, you want to give her the Black Sea, and not only the six vilayets but something more. Having given her that, you say we must be disinterested, everybody suspects us, and therefore you propose to clap on to the French this area in which she is not interested, and to which she has no claim, and which she may use to our disadvantage. She certainly would in the event of hostilities, and in respect of oil she would be sure to reap very considerable profit in the interim. I think that perhaps we are not drawing enough attention to the importance of the oil and the pipeline. Mr. Balfour will say, "Why not let the people cut their own throats? Why bother about them?" But I think Europe will be by no means willing to leave the pipeline from Batum to Baku, which is a great international concern, in the hands of small highland republics, whose people are engaged in these pursuits. I think Europe will insist upon some sort of a control, and will call upon us or somebody else to supply it.

MR. MONTAGU: Assuming France is there and we are in India. This country is nearer to Armenia than India, and the only danger is that the French would use it for some sinister purpose on India. I have listened to what General Wilson said. This is a military proposition, and I will take his word. But I do not see what the French troops in this country could do, cut off from France by our naval superiority. If you tell me that, notwithstanding that, the French could seriously menace India, I

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agree we should have to keep more troops there. I will only add that there is still the possibility, if you think France is such a frightful danger, and if you conceive there are certain objections to our adding to our responsibilities, of a neutral activity on behalf of the League of Nations, as was suggested by General Cox at the last meeting.

LORD CURZON: That idea did not receive much support, because it was thought that a small nation would be lacking in the requisite force and moral prestige. I do not want to go on arguing about France. But I have a very forcible recollection of the old days in the Foreign Office and of the trouble that France caused us in Siam, which was thousands of miles from France. All that is being said of France in the Caucasus now could have been said of France in Siam then. Not only had we great trouble with France but we were within a snap of the fingers of war with her in Lord Rosebery's day. If you have a friendly France there is no danger, but if you have, as one day you may, a hostile France, why add to her power of offence?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The point is simple. It may be a bad point or a good one, but it is a simple one. Everybody being agreed that the best possible thing would be an independent set of republics, and it being further agreed that somebody would have to keep order there, the question really is whether it is better for us that we should do it or that somebody else should do it. The idea that it is of advantage to us to keep order there is fantastic. It is clear that it will be a burden to us to keep order there if we have to keep a force there, and a burden which I do not believe any future House of Commons would listen to for a moment. If it really meant keeping a considerable force there they would not listen to it. They never would agree to do that, I feel sure. That is the real point, as it seems to me. I agree there is a possibility that a combination between France and Russia here might cause us considerable military difficulties. I cannot think, even so, that General Wilson has satisfied me that the fact that we have a small force in occupation here would really materially diminish our difficulties. If you conceive a regenerated Russia and a militarised Armenia, I cannot think that our position would be tolerable militarily in Georgia, and we should have to go out.

GENERAL WILSON: I agree, but that was not what we were thinking of.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If Russia is not there, then I cannot conceive that France by herself would ever wish in any conceivable circumstances to attack England. Of course it is possible to imagine anything, such as a new Napoleon, but, short of that, I cannot conceive France wishing to do so.

LORD CURZON: The point is that she might make herself disagreeable, rather than attack. She could put on pressure which might be dangerous and bring us to the verge of war.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If we occupy this region we should occupy Trans-Caspia, I suppose.

LORD CURZON: I hope not. We are talking only of staying in the Caucasus to set the people on their legs there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You ought not to be taken in by that phrase. We get there so often, and we always remain.

LORD CURZON: The condition of affairs is different now. You might as well argue against all the Powers who are going to be charged with this burden all over the world. Are you going to lay down the proposition that everybody is going to remain? Most of them will be anxious to get out, whether it is America or France.

GENERAL WILSON: If Lord Robert Cecil can form the League of Nations——

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then we need not trouble about it.

MR. BALFOUR: That is my view. Why bother now?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Nobody will be anxious to be the mandatory under the League of Nations.

GENERAL WILSON: We want to know what we are to do. This is the telegram* to which I have to send a reply:† "It would be of the greatest assistance if I could be informed of the general lines which the policy to be adopted in the the Caucasus will follow, in view of the early departure of troops to occupy Batum and of the extension of my command to Baku and Krasnovodsk. I am referring not to the Turks but to the Russian, Armenian, Persian, and Tartar inhabitants."

* E.C. 2612. † E.C. 2709.

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MR. BALFOUR : This unhealthy curiosity on the part of our pro-consuls in distant parts of the world is embarrassing.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : What that means is this. The unhappy man there very naturally wants to know what kind of things he is to say to the local tribes : are we going to be here permanently, or are we going to leave it as soon as we can ?

MR. BALFOUR : I should put it all upon the Conference.

LORD CURZON : I thought we were preparing the case for the Conference. That is the object of these meetings. I was told that Sir Erle Richards had been instructed by the Prime Minister to draw up a summary or brief for the Government. Accordingly it was said, as the Eastern Committee has been managing these matters for some time, that it would be a good thing to go over the whole of the areas one after the other, discuss them, and enable Sir Erle Richards to form some conception as to what the brief should be. Now that we are attempting to perform that task, Mr. Balfour says : " Why not postpone it to the Peace Conference ? " I am trying to help you at the Peace Conference, Mr. Balfour, for you will be our chief representative there.

MR. BALFOUR : I do not think it is our business to have a policy with regard to these places.

LORD CURZON : We shall get on very badly if we do not. I think we must have an idea of what we are working for.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I think that is the right thing. I am exceedingly grateful to Lord Curzon for having put down in a number of propositions what he thinks should be the policy. I have not exactly in mind what he has said, but what I should like to say is that we would prefer not to have anything to do with the Caucasus republics, that on the whole the balance of advantage of our going there is a very slight one, and that we see considerable political disadvantages in our going there. Under those circumstances we would prefer not to go there. If we are driven to it, and the Peace Conference insists upon it, we would not actually refuse to go. That is the kind of line, I think.

MR. BALFOUR : I agree, except as regards the last part. I think we really must wait to know what other obligations are imposed upon us by the Conference, when we have all cooled down and we know what our military forces are going to be after the War. I would not say that we should arrange to do it if we are pressed ; but, if pressed, we will consider whether it is within our powers. I should not mind that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : That is the kind of thing I should like to see as our policy. When we go to the Peace Conference, if we find there is any advantage politically in the French going there, we should not mind their going there a bit.

MR. BALFOUR : I part company with you there.

LORD CURZON : I cannot agree with you either.

GENERAL SMUTS : What we should do is this. I agree with Mr. Balfour that we should not increase our exposed military frontiers beyond what we have already, which are very large indeed. If this is going to be a military proposition we should not touch it, but I do not think it is really a military proposition. It need not be that. You see, at the time the Conference comes on we shall be the only Power on the spot. It is quite possible, after looking at the affairs of Trans-Caucasia, the Conference will come to the conclusion that these States cannot be sovereign independent States ; they will require a helping hand for some time to come, and there must be some European Power, in some undefined way, looking after them. We shall be the only Power there, so the first party they must ask will be ourselves. They will say, " Will you look after this people in the meantime ? " and I do not see how we can refuse it. If we refuse it, of course they may offer it to France, and I think that is a dangerous thing. I look upon the Sykes-Picot Agreement as a dangerous thing, and I look upon extensions of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and giving a still greater area of intrigue to France farther to the north as also dangerous.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : It will not be an extension of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, but will be something in exchange for the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

GENERAL SMUTS : I am afraid of that. What will happen will be that we shall go there with the idea of exchanging but that France will stick to both.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: No. It is to be part of the deal with France over the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

GENERAL SMUTS: To get her out of the south?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, that is the point. This map, with a piece of tracing paper over it, shows exactly what is contemplated.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: We had the same thing at St. Jean de Maurienne. We offered one thing to the Italians in exchange for another, and came back having lost both.

GENERAL SMUTS: My feeling is that we are so pledged in good faith to the Arabs that we must do anything we can for the Arabs. They have been our Allies, they look to us to see them through this business, and it is not really a case, as Mr. Balfour argued at the last meeting, of our having signed our word in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. On the other side you have to put our Allies, who are looking to us and who rely on our good faith to see them through. Whatever we can do to help the Arabs out of their trouble I think we must do.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is the basis of my view about the whole thing.

GENERAL SMUTS: You did not argue that at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I had said that at a previous meeting and I did not want to repeat it. That is my whole basis. I should not dream of advocating anything about this, because it does not matter to me a straw. I take that view, because these regions would be a most awful curse to any country.

GENERAL SMUTS: Get France entirely out of the south, under the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

GENERAL WILSON: We should like the Foreign Office to tear up their own agreements, of course, but it is rather a dangerous thing, because an agreement arrived at is found to be inconvenient, that another agreement is come to.

GENERAL SMUTS: There are two dangers; one is that it is dangerous to leave a military Power like France in Syria; the other is that it is dangerous to put another military Power on this route in Asia Minor. Supposing you were to balance these two dangers against each other, which would you prefer? Supposing we could get rid of France on the Syrian front——

GENERAL WILSON: Of course the Sykes-Picot Agreement had more to do with oil than the French.

GENERAL SMUTS: I assume that, too. The whole point Lord Robert proposes is to get rid of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

GENERAL WILSON: By giving away Georgia, and these other places?

GENERAL SMUTS: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What it comes to is this. On Map 2 A* with the tracing paper over it you will see what is contemplated. It shows the Arab countries as coming within the British sphere, and leaves a tiny little bit of the Lebanon to the French, and that is the only thing they get out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement so far as the Arabs are concerned. On the other hand, you extend their Armenia so as to include the whole of Armenia, including Russian Armenia. I think, personally, if you go to that extent you will have to let them be the mandatory, if they wish it. I think they will be extraordinarily silly if they do it, but if they wish it they must be allowed to be the mandatory for Georgia, Daghestan, and Azerbaijan, because I agree with the opinion of Lord Curzon that whoever has Armenia will be so close to these four Caucasus republics that it will be almost impossible to have one Power as the mandatory Power for the four Caucasus republics and another for Armenia. That still seems to me to be a sound argument, but if the military authorities attach great importance to the French not coming into the four republics as the mandatory, I would not mind personally. I am sorry, but I am not convinced by the military argument, although I dare say I am entirely wrong.

LORD CURZON: You will remember that at our last meeting we were discussing the revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and confining the French to the

* E.C. 2525.

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strip in the Lebanon, and when we asked Mr. Balfour's opinion and your own as to whether the French, whatever the bribe, would be likely to accept such an arrangement, the answer was in the negative.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: You said the French and their Ambassador were mad about it.

MR. BALFOUR: That was Lord Robert, and I advised you to substitute a new insanity about Armenia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We are going to give them Beirut and the Lebanon.

GENERAL SMUTS: I was asking a military question, and I want to have an opinion from the General Staff. Supposing you take this alternative, that you can clear the French out of Syria—and you say their presence there is a bad thing for us. If you can clear them out of Syria you clear them off the Mesopotamia Railway to Baghdad, you clear them out of the Sykes-Picot area, but you leave them the three original Armenian vilayets, you give them the other three Turkish vilayets, and you give them those small States in the north. Would you think that a good bargain, from our point of view, to clear them out of the south and to transpose them to the north, supposing you were making a choice of the two?

GENERAL WILSON: I must ask the Admiralty about the oil.

GENERAL SMUTS: You would then command completely the Mesopotamia oil?

GENERAL WILSON: No, because they can get to Enzeli if they like. They will go to Baku and Enzeli, and you lose the Caspian.

GENERAL SMUTS: We are told the Mesopotamia oilfields are undeveloped.

LORD CURZON: They are. On the other hand Baku is the greatest oilfield in the world, at any rate in the Eastern Hemisphere; I do not know about America.

MR. BALFOUR: Whenever we discuss this sort of question and it is suggested that the French should go to a place, we always assume that they are going there for ever; whenever the proposal is that we should go to a place we assume that we shall be out of it in two or three years.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We shall never be out of Baku once we get there.

GENERAL SMUTS: I should not like to go to the Conference undecided, because the result might be in the end that the French may be all over this area. We have to make up our mind either to accept the Sykes-Picot Agreement and let France remain there and for ourselves to be in the north, or clear her out and let her go to the north.

GENERAL WILSON: Cannot we bribe France in some other way?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: How?

GENERAL WILSON: I do not know; that is not my part of the business.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: How can we do that if you do not like this arrangement?

GENERAL WILSON: That is a Foreign Office affair.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then I answer that we cannot. I know that if Mr. Balfour or myself makes any proposition with regard to Africa, we shall be told that there is an aeroplane station, or a submarine base, or that it is the oldest colony, or it will bitterly offend some New Zealand politician if we do it, or something of that kind. It is always the same.

GENERAL WILSON: Quite.

MR. BALFOUR: General Smuts has done two things in the short speech he has made. He has put a question to the General Staff, and he has also raised, for the first time to-day, but not for the first time in these conferences which I have not been able to attend, the question of an exchange. Please let the Conference keep in mind that if you are dealing with an exchange you must keep Italy in order. You cannot talk as if this were a question between France and England only, for it is not. It is a tripartite matter. I see in this map things that Italy claims in Asia, which the Prime

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Minister has given, or half given, including the Greek population there, Smyrna, and all sorts of things.

GENERAL SMUTS: The conditions have not been specified.

MR. BALFOUR: You cannot go upon that technical point. If you look at the Treaty of London there are two things to remember. There is the Treaty of London, by which Italy was got into the war. One of the clauses of that treaty said that Italy was to have certain advantages, if we got advantages. That treaty is still operative, unfortunately, and if you give France these things you must give Italy something.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I put this question to General Wilson? Suppose it be thought that for political reasons it will be difficult to get the mandatory power of Great Britain in these four republics admitted, is there any Power you would rather see there than France?

GENERAL WILSON: America.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You would rather see America there?

GENERAL WILSON: Yes. As regards the other question, I think I should like to consider which of those two, from a military point of view, would be the more dangerous if France was hostile. I am inclined to think that giving her Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan would be the more dangerous, as she might be able to raise a bigger army there. But I should like to look into that, because it is a difficult question of railways, roads, &c.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Supposing it is found impossible to break away from the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the French insist on keeping Syria and Area A, how will that affect our policy in Caucasia? Surely, if the French are going to stay in Syria and Area A, then still more certainly ought we to stay in Caucasia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Certainly.

GENERAL SMUTS: Should we not put Italy in the place of Russia, as we are bound to some extent to support her against France? Evidently these two are spoiling for a fight, and why should we not put Italy somewhere?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: She would be better than France.

GENERAL WILSON: Do you mean put Italy in Georgia?

GENERAL SMUTS: Yes, supposing America will not go there.

GENERAL WILSON: And supposing you have to keep to the Sykes-Picot Agreement?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If we have to keep to that, and if it is of any military advantage to keep Caucasia, we should go for it.

GENERAL SMUTS: In the opinion of the General Staff, which is the better for us: to clear France away from the south—from Egypt, from Mesopotamia, and move her to the north? If you say that, on the whole, is the better thing for us, to get her away to the north, we must exchange that northern area for the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

LORD CURZON: If we move her away to the north, we are not bound to give her the six vilayets and the Caucasus as well.

GENERAL SMUTS: I am afraid you will be forced to do so. If France declines to make the exchange and insists upon the Sykes-Picot Agreement, then the question is, what are we going to do in the north? Either we shall have to go there ourselves—we shall be sitting there, as a matter of fact, in Trans-Caucasia, for we are there now. We shall either have to remain there or give it to some Power we can trust; certainly not to France, and we may have to consider whether we can conciliate Italy and discharge our obligations to her by putting her there, especially as we know that, in any case, Italy will be better than France for us.

LORD CURZON: Will not these matters be decided not merely in their local topographical relation? When we come to terms with France and try to get rid of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, it need not be a question of the exchange of one area in Asia Minor for another area in Asia Minor. There are other parts of the world. There are many French claims in which she will want our support in Europe—the Rhine, for

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instance. There are territories in Africa and elsewhere which she wants to keep. Our relations with France and the future settlement by the Peace Conference will not be a matter that will be determined in parcels in different parts of the world, but will be part of a great whole. Are we necessarily bound to assume, to order to purchase her surrender of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, that we must give her a larger area in the same part of the world?

MR. BALFOUR: I am entirely of your opinion. We have got accidentally on to this question of exchange. My earlier observations were not based upon the Sykes-Picot Agreement or anything connected with it. The broader question you have raised is going to be the great difficulty of this Conference, I am convinced. You say, Why cannot we come to an arrangement with the French embodying everything? That is the one thing the French want. If I were to go to the French to-morrow and say, "Will you make common cause with us against everybody; we will support everything you want which does not affect our interests, and you must support everything which does not affect your interests," I have not a doubt that we should come to an agreement. We should come to it at the cost of our own principles, probably; at the cost of our obligations to the Arabs, probably; at the cost of our friendship with America, probably; and at the cost of our friendship with Italy, probably; but it could be done. I do not think it ought to be done.

LORD CURZON: I was not assuming that, of course.

MR. BALFOUR: No, but the result is: how are you going to start these things? If you picture to yourself going to the Conference, and the French say, "Come and have a talk with us," and the Italians saying the same thing, and the Americans saying, "What we want is to have a whole-hearted interchange of ideas"; if you draw out that picture with any accuracy of detail you will see what an extraordinarily difficult position it is.

LORD CURZON: We must in any case have a talk with them over these areas.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not think we ought to start. If they come to us and say, "We do not like the Sykes-Picot Agreement and we are prepared to modify it," I am prepared to go on.

LORD CURZON: We have already said that.

MR. BALFOUR: And I think we could press them upon that.

LORD CURZON: I was not thinking of backstairs arrangements, but of having all the pieces on the board at the Peace Conference with regard to the different parts of the world. All the fate of the world is going to be settled by the adjustments that will be made, and we may have the opportunity of meeting France on many points.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Difficulties of this kind will arise. When you go to Paris to meet the Allies, I suppose one or other of them some day or other will say, "What about the Middle East?" Then somebody will turn to Great Britain and say, "What are your ideas about the way it is to be arranged?" We shall have to begin by saying that we are bound by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and anything we say must be subject to our obligations there. Apart from that, if we are to look at it generally, as to what would be the best settlement there from every point of view primarily for the peace of the world—and that is the way we must discuss it—what we should say would be that we think it is impossible to split up the other countries; the mandatory for one Arab country must contain all the rest; we do not see who could do it except ourselves, and therefore it must be left to us. Similarly, there must be one mandatory for Armenia; you cannot split up Armenia; we think that should be France. I should leave out the whole of the Caucasian republics if I were doing it, and say nothing about them. If they said, "You have forgotten the Caucasian republics," I should say, "As to that we should be glad to hear what is to be said, but we feel there is a very great difficulty in asking France to undertake such a difficult job as that." We are there, and I should try to make such a case as I could, although personally I think it would be a very feeble one. The French would say, "We should like to go to Armenia; we should be coterminous with these people; you ought to let us do it."

MR. BALFOUR: Let us step lightly over what you have discussed, and then go on to your next stage. What would you say to the Italians?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should say to them, "Go on." I should say that this is all subject to the principle of the Anglo-French declaration, that our object is not to annex any countries, but to set up native Governments. We regard that principle as applying all through. Therefore only our position will be, if the native Government asks for assistance once we have set it up, we must give it in all these cases. Armenia is probably a special case where the French will have to take, as we have in Mesopotamia, substantial control because of the local conditions. Normally, wherever you can have a native Government, there is to be a native Government, and the European Power is only to come in if asked. I should apply that to the St. Jean de Maurienne agreement. I should say, "Very well, by all means the Italians shall have all the bit that is marked, but only on those terms. They are not to go in unless they are asked."

MR. BALFOUR: And we are to go into Mesopotamia?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We shall procure an invitation. As a matter of fact we have been asked to go in.

MR. BALFOUR: Then the Italians will say, "Is this the way you keep your engagements? The idea was that we three Powers—at that time it was four, but Russia is out of it—from the fall of the Turkish Empire were to get the same relative advantage. We were all to share alike, roughly speaking, as far as that could be done. We, the Italians"—I am now speaking for Baron Sonnino—"observe the way you keep that agreement, and you are going to stay, apparently permanently, and add to your dominions one of the richest parts of the earth."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I interrupt? Our agreement of the Treaty of London had nothing to do with the Turkish Empire, so far as the Italians were concerned. They were to have an equitable share in the Mediterranean.

MR. BALFOUR: It was in consequence of the fall of the Turkish Empire.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is not a formal but a real thing. What they care about is to be on equal terms with the French in the Mediterranean.

MR. BALFOUR: Still, if you will allow me to finish, you will see that the Italians have not much reason to be pleased at the suggestion. We come out of it apparently with something like permanent occupation—I do not know how to put it, permanent control—over Arabia. The French come out of it with permanent control over Syria and possibly Armenia, possibly the three republics. As to the Italians, you are not going to allow them to have a permanent control over the South of Asia Minor. Are you including Syria, because that brings in the Greek question?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, not any control.

MR. BALFOUR: Then they will say, "Where is the equality?"

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They chose to demand a country which was already provided for. It is quite unsuitable for control, as there is a vigorous Turkish population there.

LORD CURZON: After all, the Italians will get from the Alliance elsewhere much more than they deserve.

MR. BALFOUR: If we are going by deserts—— !

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think we are bound to do more than say—"We, the English and the French, have made a declaration: that must apply according to your own principles."

MR. BALFOUR: They will say, with a certain amount of justice, "Do you mean to treat your declaration quite politely? We think you are honest fellows, although you deceive yourselves. Is your declaration different from the declaration about Egypt, and is the fate of Mesopotamia going to be different from that of Egypt?" I hope and think it is, but I am not at all sure. But I am quite confident that they will be sure.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: So far as Mesopotamia is concerned, there is a good deal to be said for your view. If I were talking to Baron Sonnino I should say, "It will very likely turn out that we shall have to exercise control for a long time there because there is not a real possibility of a native Government for the moment. As to

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the case of Arabia I do not agree at all. I think there will be a perfectly genuine Arabian Government, and that there will be very little interference from us as to the greater part of it. We shall, perhaps, give them assistance here and there, but I do not believe we are going to dominate Feisal's kingdom.

GENERAL SMUTS: What about Cyprus? Do we attach any value to Cyprus?

MR. BALFOUR: That is a very big question to start. I think the least we say about it the better. I agree it may be kept for emergencies.

LORD CURZON: We came here to-day with what turned out to be a vain hope, on my part, that we should arrive at something like a conclusion. I still think it is possible, after going through the report of what has been said to-day, to draw up something that may be helpful to those who represent us at the Peace Conference.

GENERAL SMUTS: As Lord Robert says, there is a conclusion that we have to come to.

LORD CURZON: If you will allow me I will go through the papers again and read what Lord Robert Cecil has said, and the general argument, and then submit a number of propositions which I will circulate to the Committee with a view of getting something like a summing-up. I really do not know what is the position at present, and if I were asked what the Committee wanted to do I should not know what to say. There is a body of union, but the difficulty is the way to put it. That is as regards the Caucasus and Armenia. We cannot take Arabia now, because the Secretary of State for India has gone, and his presence is vital.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We are absolutely agreed upon Syria and Palestine. I do not think there is any difficulty. If I may say so, I think it would be most valuable if you would be so kind as to formulate a policy on Syria and Palestine, as well as on Mesopotamia. On these matters I think we really are agreed.

LORD CURZON: Very well, I will circulate the draft propositions separately.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And then we will make our observations in writing, and if, as a result of that, you think there is a real difference of opinion, it may be discussed.

LORD CURZON: Then we will take Arabia on Monday next.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 9, 1918.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 43rd Minutes.

F 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 16, 1918, *at* 5 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

Lieutenant-General the Right Hon. J. C. SMUTS, K.C.

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended:—

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., India Office.

SIR ALFRED HAMILTON GRANT, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Middle Eastern Questions—with a view to the Peace Conference.

1. The Committee had under consideration a series of draft resolutions on (*a*) Caucasus and Armenia, (*b*) Syria, and (*c*) Palestine, which had been drawn up by the Chairman in accordance with the decision of the Committee at the previous Meeting (E.C. 42nd Meeting, Minute 2 (i)).

The Committee decided—

To adopt the Resolutions subject to the following amendments:—

Caucasus and Armenia. (E.C.-2715.)

(*a.*) *Resolution* 6.—For the words "matter that concerns themselves" substitute "matter that in the main concerns themselves."

Resolution 7.—For the words "to maintain order or to offer protection to the States concerned" substitute "to protect inter-

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national interests in the areas concerned," and in the last line for the word "would" substitute "might."

Resolution 9.—To omit the words "in the interests of order in Persia and Trans-Caspia."

Mr. Montagu desired that his objection to our remaining in the Caucasus in any capacity should be recorded in the Minutes.

The Resolutions as regards the Caucasus and Armenia in the form finally adopted by the Committee were as follows (E.C.-2715A:—

(1.) *We desire to see strong independent States—offshoots of the former Russian Empire—in the Caucasus.*

(2.) *Of these States Georgia is the most advanced and has the strongest claims to early recognition.*

(3.) *Recognition of the remaining States, viz., Daghestan, Azerbaijan, and Russian Armenia, must depend on the march of events and their successful assertion of an autonomous existence.*

(4.) *Whether Russian Armenia shall have a separate existence (as distinct from Turkish Armenia) will be determined in the main by the attitude of the people themselves.*

(5.) *Whether the independent States of the Caucasus combine hereafter in a Federation, or prefer to remain separate is a matter for their own determination.*

(6.) *Similarly their relations to the present or future Government or Governments of Russia is a matter that in the main concerns themselves.*

(7.) *If it be decided at the Peace Conference, either as the result of a request from the States, or at the instance of the League of Nations (should such be set up), that the services of a Great Power are required for a period to protect international interests in the areas concerned, the selection of America would be preferable to that of France, but is not in itself desirable. The selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable. Only in the last resort, and reluctantly if pressed to do so, might Great Britain provisionally accept the task.*

(8.) *In any case we have no intention of annexing any of these territories, or converting them into a British Protectorate, or of accepting any commitments which will involve the permanent maintenance of large British forces in the Caucasus.*

(9.) *It is important for the time being to maintain British naval control of the Caspian.*

(10.) *The ultimate settlement should provide if possible for the declaration as free ports of Batum, Poti, Trebizond, and Baku, and for free transit on the railway from Batum to Baku.*

(11.) *Special steps may require to be taken for the due safeguarding of international interests in the city and oilfields of Baku.*

(12.) *In the reconstitution of Georgia, it will be desirable to include within its boundaries the Moslem Georgians of Batum and Lazistan.*

(13.) *If an independent Armenian State be constituted out of either the six Armenian vilayets or a smaller area, and if a Great Power be called upon either by the League of Nations, or by the people themselves, to act as protector to the new State, Great Britain should refrain from advancing any claims, and should support the case either of America or France preferably, in the interests of a revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of* 1916, *of France.*

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Syria. (E.C.–2716.)

(*b.*) *Resolution* 2.—For the words "political predominance" substitute "special political position."

Resolution 3.—From the word "claims" to "Cilicia" substitute "claims to a special political position at Alexandretta."

Resolution 6.—After the words "Syrian question" add the following new sentence: "It is accordingly expressly understood that the enjoyment of a special political position does not carry with it the right to fortify any of the Syrian ports concerned."

Resolution 7 to be excised.

Draft Resolution 8 *becomes Resolution* 7.

Resolution 8.—At the instance of Mr. Balfour, the following new Resolution was accepted:—

"In any readjustment in Syria, the claims of Italy should be taken into account."

The Resolutions as regards Syria in the form finally adopted by the Committee were as follows (E.C.–2716A):—

(1.) *It is desirable by negotiation with our Allies to cancel the Sykes-Picot Agreement of* 1916, *more particularly those clauses which confer rights upon France in area A, and in the Syrian portion of the Blue Zone.*

(2.) *We should support the French claims to a special political position in the Lebanon and Beirut.*

(3.) *We should support the French claims to a special political position at Alexandretta.*

(4.) *We should support the Amir Feisal and the Syrians in the creation of an autonomous Arab State, with capital at Damascus and access to the sea (probably at Tripoli).*

(5.) *It is desirable that the commercial rights enjoyed by Great Britain at Alexandretta and by France at Haifa —in the event of those ports being assigned to France and Great Britain—should be equally enjoyed by the Amir Feisal at both ports.*

(6.) *In accordance with the Anglo-French Declaration of November,* 1918, *the principle of self-determination should be made as far as possible the basis of settlement of the Syrian question. It is accordingly expressly understood that the enjoyment of a special political position does not carry with it the right to fortify any of the Syrian ports concerned.*

(7.) *It is essential that no foreign influence other than that of Great Britain should be predominant in areas A and B.*

(8.) *In any re-adjustment in Syria, the claims of Italy should be taken into account.*

Palestine. (E.C.–2717.)

(*c.*) *Resolution* 4.—Mr. Balfour said that he wished to record his doubts as to the wisdom of Resolution 4.

Lord Robert Cecil, on the other hand, thought that Resolution 4, in its present form, was not sufficiently strongly worded.

Resolution 6.—For the words "care should be taken" substitute "every effort should be made."

At the suggestion of Mr. Montagu, the Committee decided—

To adopt the following new general Resolution:—

"In no circumstances should any claim by Turkey to share the sovereignty, real or nominal, of any of the States or territories here dealt with, viz., Mesopotamia, Syria, the Caucasus, Armenia, Palestine, or Arabia, be admitted."

The Resolutions as regards Palestine in the form finally adopted by the Committee were as follows (E.C.–2717A):—

(1.) *The Committee is opposed to the institution of an international administration in Palestine.*

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(2.) *The Committee favours the nomination of a single Great Power, either by the League of Nations, or otherwise, to act as representative of the nations in Palestine.*
(3.) *Such Power should not be France or Italy, but should be either the United States of America or Great Britain.*
(4.) *While we would not object to the selection of the United States of America, yet if the offer were made to Great Britain, we ought not to decline.*
(5.) *The choice, whatever form it may take, should be, as far as possible, in accordance with the expressed desires* (a) *of the Arab population,* (b) *of the Zionist community in Palestine.*
(6.) *Every effort should be made at the Peace Conference to secure an equitable re-adjustment of the boundaries of Palestine, both on the north and east and south.*
(7.) *In any case the pledges as to the care of the Holy Places must be effectively fulfilled.*

Trans-Caspia.

2. Mr. Montagu asked that the question of the withdrawal of General Malleson's force in Trans-Caspia, raised by the Viceroy's telegram No. 16538, dated the 10th December, 1918 (E.C.–2693), might be considered by the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Committee decided—

To discuss the question at the Meeting to be held on Wednesday, the 18th instant.

Middle Eastern Questions: Arabia.

3. The Committee resumed the discussion, adjourned from the 39th Meeting, of the future settlement of Arabia.

The Chairman briefly reviewed our pledges to the King of the Hejaz; the question that had been raised of the latter's title, and the extent to which European influence, other than British, might or might not have to be admitted into the Hejaz.

He suggested that our policy, generally speaking, might proceed on the following lines:—

(i.) We should endeavour to secure from the French and the Italians the recognition of our special political position in Arabia, which the former admitted in the correspondence of 1916-1917 and in the negotiations of 1917.
(ii.) But we should not claim exclusive control of the foreign relations of the King.
(iii.) The intrusion of foreign Powers into the Hejaz should be confined to purposes of pilgrimage, trade, and the like; and their representatives should have no diplomatic status.
(iv.) The necessity of subsidising the King in place of the former Turkish subvention must be considered. Such subvention should probably be forthcoming from the Arab States of Syria and elsewhere.
(v.) The supply of arms in the future must also be regulated by international or other agreement.
(vi.) We should abstain from any interference in the question of the Khalifate, or the choice of a Khalif.
(vii.) It did not seem worth while to interfere with the title "King of the Arab countries" which had been assumed by the King of the Hejaz.
(viii.) But it would be unwise to encourage in any form his pretensions to political sovereignty over the whole of Arabia, seeing that they would be disputed both by the Arab peoples of Mesopotamia and by the Arab chieftains of the interior and coast.

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Sir Hamilton Grant, Secretary to the Foreign Department of the Government of India, who was invited by the Chairman to state the view of that Government, said that they would like to see (*a*) as little interference in the Hejaz as possible, (*b*) an international arrangement by means of a tripartite agreement between Great Britain, France, and Italy, who would combine to subsidise the King.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *To ask the Foreign Office, in consultation with the Chairman, to draw up Draft Resolutions on the lines of those prepared in the case of Syria and Palestine, indicating the policy recommended by the Committee in respect of Arabia.*

(b.) *To meet again at the same hour and place on the 18th instant to consider the Draft Resolutions, and to proceed with the examination of the Arabian question.*

(A shorthand verbatim report of the Meeting is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.)

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 16, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, the 16th December, 1918, at 5 P.M.

LORD CURZON: At our last meeting I undertook, as the Committee will remember, to draw up some draft resolutions recording what I thought was approximately the result of our discussions about the Caucasus, Armenia, Syria and Palestine, and I undertook to circulate them to the Committee so that the members might see and, if necessary, comment upon them. I had the advantage of showing them to General Smuts, who thought that they were a fair summary of our proceedings. They are necessarily couched in rather general terms—I do not think one could go further than that—and it is for the Committee to tell me whether, on the whole, they are a fairly accurate summary of the conclusions which we reached.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, I think they are very good, if I may say so. There are one or two small points to which I would like to draw attention.

LORD CURZON: We will take them in turn, starting with the Caucasus and Armenia, and anybody who wishes to comment on any of the draft resolutions can do so.

RESOLUTIONS AS TO THE CAUCASUS AND ARMENIA.

MR. MONTAGU: On No. 1 I have no great point of substance, but I want to ask whether it is advisable to use the words "We desire." Perhaps I am expressing a view which I alone suggest, but I do not think the Caucasus is very important to us one way or the other. All your other resolutions seem to me to be couched in language which is not so vehement as the expression "We desire to see strong independent States." Could you have a little more colourless phrase than "We desire"?

LORD CURZON: "We" is not the Government; it is this Committee. I think you must bear that in mind. We are an Advisory Committee to the Government; we are not the Government. We cannot dictate to the Government or our representatives what line they should take in Paris. We are merely indicating to them what is the view of the Committee. I certainly understood from our discussion here that it was the unanimous feeling of this Committee, at any rate so far as it was expressed, that these independent States should come into existence in the Caucasus. It is certainly mine, but I may be exaggerating the degree to which other people adhered to it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should have thought we were all agreed that it would be desirable. It is a question, I understand, merely of the actual drafting?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We could easily modify "We desire." There would be no difficulty in using some other phrase, if that would meet you.

LORD CURZON: I do not quite know what Mr. Montagu wants. What substitute would you like to put? It does not make much difference.

MR. MONTAGU: I will not press it.

LORD CURZON: Then resolutions 2 and 3. The independent Republic of Daghestan appears to be in some peril, from a telegram that came to-day.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, there is much confusion there.

LORD CURZON: Then 4, 5, 6, 7.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Taking 6 and 7 together, I do not know that it is intended, but it looks rather as if the conclusion is that what we should prefer would be that these should go back to Russia. You say in 6 that it is entirely a matter for them whether they have any concern with Russia. Then you go on to deal with other possible alternatives, namely, America, France, and Great Britain, and you reject them all. You see my point?

LORD CURZON: I do not think that is so.

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GENERAL SMUTS: Yes, I see your point; but I do not think that is so.

LORD CURZON: 6, in my view, was not intended to be read with 7, which follows it, but should be read with 5, which precedes. We are considering the possible future of these States, and we say that whether they wish to constitute a federation of their own or to remain separate is a matter that concerns themselves, and that whether they go back to Russia or not equally concerns themselves.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is true that No. 5 does entirely concern them, but is it true to say it is a matter that only concerns them whether they go back to Russia or not? I should rather have doubted it, in view of the expressions of military opinion at the last meeting.

LORD CURZON: What you want to do is to qualify the phrase "is a matter that concerns themselves"? You mean it concerns us and other people too?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. You say "Go back to Russia if you like, it does not matter to us;" then you go on to deal with the possible position of other Great Powers, and you say, as I think, rather too strongly, according to my view, although I think the Committee agree with you and not with me, you rather strongly reject France—at any rate you reject France—and you do not like America, and you say that we should be very reluctant to accept any position there, I admit I rather share Mr. Montagu's view, that it is possible to exaggerate the importance of the Caucasus to us. Personally I should have thought almost anything, from our strict national point of view, was better than that these States should go back to a powerful Russia. I think that would be the most dangerous to us of all the solutions discussed last time.

LORD CURZON: I was not contemplating that at all. There are struggling into existence in the regions of the north of the Caucasus various new Russian States. There are the States that are endeavouring to be set up by the Cossacks, and I can well conceive a situation of affairs in which a Cossack State might come into existence from the Don territory and the north of the Caucasus to the Caspian, and that this community, if it attained an independent and reasonably powerful existence, might desire to enter into a federation with these offshoots of the old Russian Empire lying to the south of the main Caucasian range.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Is there a military danger if they join with Russia? I think there is great deal of danger in Trans-Caucasia being in the hands of any Western Power. It is an avenue to India, but it is not an avenue for Russia to India. It is not the Caucasus that is a danger to India from the Russian side but the Orenburg line. The Caucasus may be a danger to the people on the west.

LORD CURZON: Would you like to qualify the phrase, by saying that it is a matter which in the main concerns themselves?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should rather like to leave out No. 6.

LORD CURZON: It is put in with a deliberate purpose. Let us suppose that they are able to build up a number of Russian communities north of the Caucasus, and that the Caucasian States, whatever our relations with them in the future, say to us "What do you think about our joining a Russian State or a Russian Federation of the Caucasus"? I should like to reply "That is a matter for you; we do not desire to interfere with you; in the same way as we should be happy to see you join among yourselves, so, if you consider it desirable to join with a Russian community, well and good."

MR. BALFOUR: I do not think you can ever prevent people joining if they want to join, and it is incredible that they should not be allowed to join. If these people do want to join Russia, if you think that is possible, and it is possible, I do not thing it is any use saying we do not like it. We cannot stop it. What we can stop, if a League of Nations is worth anything, is Russia saying "Now you must join us whether you like it or not." If they want to join Russia I cannot imagine the world coming and saying "No, you must remain independent," when they do not wish to be independent.

LORD CURZON: Do you see any objection to the words?

MR. BALFOUR: No. For that reason I do not greatly dissent from No. 6.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: What was your phrase?

LORD CURZON: I suggested the words, and General Smuts supports me, "are a matter that in the main concern themselves." Do you object, Mr. Balfour?

MR. BALFOUR: Not at all.

LORD CURZON: Then we will take No. 7.

MR. MONTAGU: If you say that something was decided at the last meeting after I left I have no *locus standi*, but I enter the possible objection that we should not advise the Government to undertake the responsibility for maintaining order in the Caucasus. You will not accept the French, and you do not like the Americans; therefore the only alternative is to let the Caucasus go into anarchy as they choose on their own responsibility. I think this country would never submit to having a protectorate over the Caucasus, simply because it is believed that there are strategical positions there which would be of advantage to us in the future.

LORD CURZON: Do we say anything inconsistent with that? I do not share your views, but all we say, after stating the various alternatives is this, and I took down the words from something that fell from Mr. Balfour, who was against the view I was arguing: "Only in the last resort, and reluctantly if pressed to do so, would Great Britain provisionally accept the task." It is not an instruction to our representatives at the Peace Conference to accept it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think he went as far as that. He said, "In that case we would consider it." I remember he said he would not go as far as you upon that.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not pretend to remember. I admit I am very much afraid of some of the things we are proposing to do at this Conference. The Colonial Office would like to take up as many colonies as they could get. We talk of huge protectorates all over the place. I am really frightened at the responsibilities which we are taking upon ourselves, because who has to bear those responsibilities? Two offices in the main—the Treasury and the War Office. The Admiralty can manage quite well, but the War Office and the Treasury are mainly concerned. Where are they going to find the men or the money for these things? I do not know. Those matters are never considered. We consider the advantage to the natives, the advantage to our prestige; we consider certain things connected with trade and commerce, and all the rest of it; but money and men I have never seen referred to, and they seem to me to be the governing considerations.

GENERAL SMUTS: "Provisionally" is the important word. I do not gather that your recommendation is that we should go for good to the Caucasus.

LORD CURZON: Heaven forbid!

GENERAL SMUTS: What is going to be done in the meantime? That is the question. Something will have to be done unless there is to be absolute chaos in that area. The Peace will find us there; we shall be sitting there.

MR. MONTAGU: This resolution, as drafted, starts out by saying that if there is a Great Power wanted America is preferable to France, that France is undesirable, and that reluctantly we can be the Power. I agree it is most unfortunate for the Caucasians if there is disorder there, but why should we be there at all? Lord Curzon says, "I do not want to be there permanently," but how long does he want to be there? Presumably until these States are ready to stand upon their own. How long is that going to be? How many years will that military and financial expenditure, which Mr. Balfour says the War Office and the Treasury have to meet, continue? And presumably a contribution will be asked from India. It does not seem to me that we have the slightest concern in this country, and why should we go there, even reluctantly?

LORD CURZON: We are arguing the whole case again and multiplying the points you put the other day, which I tried ineffectually to answer. My answer then was, and I can repeat it in a sentence, that we are there entirely against our will and because we have been forced to go. Much against our will we have a force at Batum—the magnitude of which I have never been able to understand—and at

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Tiflis, and we are already in occupation of Baku. Whatever we may say, there is absolutely no alternative to the troops remaining there, at any rate for a time. You ask me to fix the period, and I reply that I cannot undertake to do so. When you state that my definition is "until those States are able to stand of themselves," I do not accept that. I hope the occupation will be provisional; but it is in existence, and for the moment we cannot withdraw. Whatever resolution is arrived at at this table or at the Conference, we cannot take those troops away immediately any more than we can take them away from other places in which we are involved. It is Murmansk one day, Siberia another. You cannot take them away and have everybody cutting everybody else's throat.

MR. MONTAGU: Why not? With very great respect I suggest it is possible to take them away. That is my view. It may be wrong-headed and obstinate, but that is what I think. In Transcaspia the sooner our troops are away the better.

LORD CURZON: I do not dissent from that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I suggest this? I am of the same opinion as Mr. Montagu. I would not really quarrel if I could strike out one sentence: "The selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable." I think that is putting it too high, personally. Then I should like to alter "would" into "might."

LORD CURZON: I do not mind the last suggestion in the least. But as to your other point, the broad grounds of strategy were argued by the General Staff, and both General Wilson and General Macdonogh stated the case in very strong terms. On grounds of policy I hold the same view; I cannot exaggerate the degree of anxiety I should feel if France, whose ambitions are already beginning to be divulged, as you have seen in the telegrams—she is talking about the six vilayets, the Black Sea, and Armenia, and we shall presently have the Caucasus thrown in too—received any encouragement from us. I am looking to twenty, thirty, or fifty years hence.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You may be right, although I do not agree with you. I said everything I have to say on the subject last time. I do not quarrel with the proposition that the selection of America would be preferable to that of France. I should really like to stop there, and then go on and simply say, "Only in the last resort, and reluctantly if pressed to do so, would Great Britain provisionally accept the task." I do not think it is any use repeating what I have said before, but I was not convinced any more than Mr. Montagu was.

MR. BALFOUR: May I start a new hare, although a very relevant one, and one we have discussed over and over again? What is the difficulty? The difficulty is that we do not much want anybody else there, and we do not want to find the troops for carrying out what may be a long and very difficult operation. Why do we want all these troops? Is it merely to keep the railway line, to prevent Baku falling into the hands of the Daghestan people, to prevent Batum being useless as a port and to protect the pipe-line and railway between the two places? If that is the only thing required I should have thought the number of troops necessary for policing purposes would not be great. But if, on the other hand, you are going to reduce Daghestan to order, which I think it was alleged in one of the papers before us took Russia a hundred years to do, if you are going to police all the mountainous parts of Azerbaijan, and perhaps of Georgia if Georgia falls into disorder, then I dare say you will require a large number of troops. I feel much disposed to say with Mr. Montagu, as regards those things, if they want to cut their own throats why do we not let them do it. I speak in the presence of the India Office here, but as I understand it we do let the tribes on the North-West Frontier, outside our own frontier, cut each other's throats in moderation. We make expeditions, as I understand, of a punitive character when they attack us, but when they merely attack each other we leave them alone. We do not try to introduce good order there. We say, "You must live in your tribal system, provided you do not become too great a nuisance to your neighbours." That is the way I should be inclined to treat these nations. I should say we are not going to spend all our money and men in civilising a few people who do not want to be civilised. We will protect Batum, Baku, the railway between them, and the pipe-line. If that was our policy I do not think it would require this immoderate strain upon our resources which frightens Mr. Montagu, Lord Robert Cecil, and Lord Curzon too. It certainly frightens me.

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LORD CURZON : In everything you have stated I respectfully concur, and at one of our earlier meetings—I do not think you were present—I quoted Mr. Stevens, who has been our Consul in that region for 20 or 30 years, and who holds rather advanced and rather jingo views about the situation. I quoted him as having said that the garrison required for the purposes you name was only 10,000 men. I think it may very likely be less, and certainly the idea of our troops wandering up into the mountains and civilising the tribes or anything of that sort never entered into my head. I attach importance to holding Batum at one end, Tiflis in the centre, and most of all to holding Baku at the eastern end. I think the line of communication from sea to sea and the protection of the pipe-line will be objects of great international importance for some time to come. As our troops are already on the spot in occupation of all these places, it seems to me inevitable that they should stay there for a time. I would not think of doing more than recognise the existing facts, and, secondly, saying—and I attach great importance to this—that if any outside Power is brought in to act as a mandatory or to assume protective functions for this area I hope it will not be France. I should be sorry if it was America. If any Power is compelled to take it up, only in the last resort might we be called upon to consider it.

MR. BALFOUR: Do we not talk round this table, with regard to these barbarous places like Daghestan, in the same way as we talk of giving a chance to the weaker States in Europe to civilise themselves?

LORD CURZON: Daghestan, if I may interrupt, is really not concerned in this. The Daghestanis, as you have pointed out, are a set of turbulent mountaineers to the north of the Caucasus. It does not matter to us what they do. The important communities here are two: first, the Georgians, who are an advanced, intelligent, and cultured community, with whom we should never attempt to interfere except by way of giving support and encouragement; secondly, a much more difficult element at the eastern end, on the Caspian, namely, the Tatars. That is really the crux of the whole thing. When you talk about the Daghestanis going to Baku, there is no question of it. It is a question of the Armenians and the Tatars going there, and they are mutual enemies. Pending the solution of that difficulty we may have to settle the oil question also.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is not really what this resolution says. Personally, I think it is an impracticable policy, but I think it is intended to guard only the pipe-line.

LORD CURZON : The railway.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Yes. If a Great Power is required for a period to maintain order or to offer protection to the States concerned, that is a great deal more than guarding the railway.

MR. BALFOUR : In our conversations we have always gone rather further.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: As far as the railway and the pipe-line are concerned, it appears to me that particularly the railway will have to be a subject which, if the League of Nations is to come into being at all, will have to be dealt with specially. These international communications will be like a great river way, you will have to have some special provision to deal with them.

MR. BALFOUR : I agree.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : You have got a Danube Commission, and things of that kind. As things get more complicated in the world you will have to go on and have the Vistula under some kind of international control, the Danube and the Rhine, and this railway.

MR. BALFOUR : You will have more difficult things than that. You will have to have some railways.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Yes, this railway and other railways. I think this is really the kind of thing. It will have to be dealt with on quite a different system. It might be possible, to go back to Lord Curzon's original suggestion, to have some kind of international force to guard a railway. When it was not a question of administering a country, but merely of guarding a railway, it might be done by an international force.

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MR. BALFOUR: I agree.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then you have the thing on quite a different footing.

MR. BALFOUR: That was why I said it was another hare I was starting.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If you want to guard the railway merely, that becomes a different proposition, and will have to be done; but I should like to say it will probably be a matter to be considered whether some special international communication will not have to be devised.

LORD CURZON: I think these words are open to your objection, namely, "to maintain order, or to offer protection to the States concerned." Perhaps they are too strong.

GENERAL SMUTS: Those words might go out, and have simply "the services of a Great Power are required for a period for the above area."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You might say that, if that is what you mean.

MR. BALFOUR: "To protect international interests."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: "In the above area."

MR. MONTAGU: If the League of Nations wants to protect international interests, it should not be done by any one Great Power, but by an international force.

GENERAL SMUTS: That is impracticable. That is the difficulty.

LORD CURZON: I am content to accept Lord Robert Cecil's suggestion: "If it be decided at the Peace Conference, either as the result of a request from the States or at the instance of the League of Nations (should such be set up), that the services of a Great Power are required for a period to protect international interests in the area concerned, the selection of America would be preferable to that of France." I hope you will not press me to recede from the phrase about France, because I feel that very strongly.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I will not press you to do anything you disagree with. I think it goes too far. If it is only a question of guarding a railway I do not think it matters whether it is France or anybody else there.

MR. BALFOUR: I would rather America did it than anybody.

LORD CURZON: With the alteration we have made, may we pass No. 7?

MR. MONTAGU: I will not delay you except to say once again with great regret that No. 7 does not express my view.

LORD CURZON: Even in its modified form?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Even if we alter "would" into "might"?

MR. MONTAGU: It is better now, I agree; but, whatever happens, I do not want to go there. I thought Lord Robert Cecil was pressing this, that if the League of Nations wanted to guard international interests it should be done by an international force. I agree to that; but I do not want to go there alone, even with a semblance of reluctance.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Supposing we say it is to be done only if the League of Nations asks a Great Power to undertake it for the League of Nations, and then only to guard international interests?

MR. MONTAGU: You have made a great improvement.

LORD CURZON: Now No. 8. That we shall accept, I think. Next No. 9.

MR. MONTAGU: I am sorry to be a nuisance, but I do not see the necessity for the British keeping order in the Caspian. I dare say for the next fortnight or three weeks, or perhaps a month, it may be necessary, but from the point of view of order in Transcaspia it seems to me, and the Government of India have sent telegrams to the effect, that they do not want, in the interests of India, to keep forces in Transcaspia.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: You will want order in Persia, surely?

LORD CURZON: I am entirely with you about Transcaspia. I am for getting out as quickly as we can. We are deeply involved, but not beyond repair. This resolution is limited to the Caspian, and the object of retaining naval control is, as stated, twofold: first, to save influences, in the main Bolshevik, at any rate hostile, from coming across the Caspian into Persia, and the same with regard to influences in Transcaspia. I should have thought that that was not only a legitimate exercise of power, but a necessary one also, in the circumstances.

ADMIRAL HOPE: I want to raise a question about the Caspian. According to the telegrams we have received we have had an engagement with some Bolshevik elements, and apparently they have got some torpedo boats and submarines at Astrakhan which they have sent down the Volga. We are doing our best, and now that we have got the railway from Batum to Baku we shall be able considerably to strengthen the forces in the Caspian, if required. We are preparing coastal motor-boats, with torpedoes, to be sent out, and we are proposing to send some bigger guns for the ships. It will all cost money, and will probably require more men. The question the Admiralty would like answered is whether they are justified in going on with these proposals.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is a difficult question. What would happen supposing the Bolsheviks were in complete control of the Caspian?

ADMIRAL HOPE: They might bombard Baku.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And cut off any connection with Krasnovodsk; but perhaps that would not matter.

LORD CURZON: We have forces there at present.

ADMIRAL HOPE: They are all open from the sea.

MR. BALFOUR: And the oil supply goes up along the coast of the Caspian to Russia. It is important to Russia, I think.

MR. MONTAGU: Why should not the oil go? Does it matter?

MR. BALFOUR: It is important it should go to our friends and not to our enemies. That is all.

MR. MONTAGU: What is going to be the effect of sending these ships out and reinforcements, and having a naval war on the Caspian? What is to be the effect politically there? How are we going to defend our action? For what object are we fighting with the Bolsheviks on the Caspian now that we are considering Peace?

MR. BALFOUR: We are doing two things: protecting the oilfields, which is an international interest, and protecting Persia, which is our interest, and Turkestan.

LORD CURZON: And also protecting Transcaspia, where we have forces, pending the withdrawal of which we must remain at Krasnovodsk.

MR. MONTAGU: It may be necessary to protect them for a fortnight or more.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Is not the object of keeping naval control of the Caspian to prevent the Bolsheviks and Bolshevism getting control of Persia?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, one of the important objects.

MR. BALFOUR: It is very important.

LORD CURZON: Speaking of the attitude of Persia, two days ago I had a talk with an old friend of mine, the former Regent of Persia, who now lives in this country, but was Regent up to some time before the war. Although he is not a very strong man, he is very intelligent, and is in sympathy with British policy and objects, and he came to talk to me about the attitude of Persia and of his friends who are coming over to the Peace Conference. I had intended to postpone saying anything about it till we come to discuss Persia on a later day, but I will mention, as the Caspian is now under discussion, that one of the main points the Persians are going to put forward is that we shall, in order to give them a chance of standing by themselves, maintain control of the Caspian. I need not develop his whole policy, but certainly one of its pivots was the retention of British naval control of the Caspian. If he is able to speak for his people, we shall not be doing anything unpalatable to

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them, as it is one of the things for which they will press. They are as conscious of the danger as any of us can be.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Cannot we each of us interpret the phrase "for the time being" as suits our own convictions? It is difficult to get absolute agreement. Mr. Montagu hopes it will be for a fortnight; I think it will have to be longer. I should not like to give an opinion about the programme put before us by Admiral Hope. That will require a great deal of consideration. Whether we ought to reinforce the fleet I cannot say.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We are going on doing it now.

GENERAL SMUTS: The situation is very dangerous there, and we shall have to do it.

LORD CURZON: Then that settles the question. It is not proposed that we should withdraw.

MR. BALFOUR: For the time being. That is the phrase in the resolution.

ADMIRAL HOPE: We cannot maintain control of the Caspian unless we have the railway in our hands. That is clear.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am not sure whether I would not say simply "It is important for the time being to maintain British naval control of the Caspian." It is true it is in the interests of order in Persia, less in Transcaspia, but there are other interests as well.

GENERAL SMUTS: There is Baku.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, and things of that sort.

LORD CURZON: I do not mind cutting out the first line.

COLONEL STORR: Does the Secretary of State for India wish his dissent to be recorded?

MR. MONTAGU: No.

LORD CURZON: Now No. 10.

MR. BALFOUR: That is quite sound.

LORD CURZON: No. 11. No. 12 is a point of ethnography and geography.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not know anything about that. I will accept No. 12 on your authority.

MR. BALFOUR: Are the Georgians in Batum mostly Moslems?

LORD CURZON: Yes. They were converted hundreds of years ago, but they are Georgians by descent and are proud of their nationality. Now that Georgia is starting an independent life it wants to get back to its old friends, and they want to go back to it.

MR. BALFOUR: If they own Batum it is important that they should go back.

LORD CURZON: One of the difficulties will be the settlement of the future of Batum. That will compel forces of some sort to remain there till these difficulties are settled.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Now No. 13. I have tried to condense into a single paragraph our views about Armenia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I entirely agree with your paragraph.

MR. BALFOUR: I have nothing to say against it.

MR. MONTAGU: May I ask a question before we leave the Caucasus and Armenia? The Eastern Committee is now busily engaged from day to day with these matters. When would you like to take the discussion, if a discussion is necessary, on other points? For instance, I should like to take the question of Batum at

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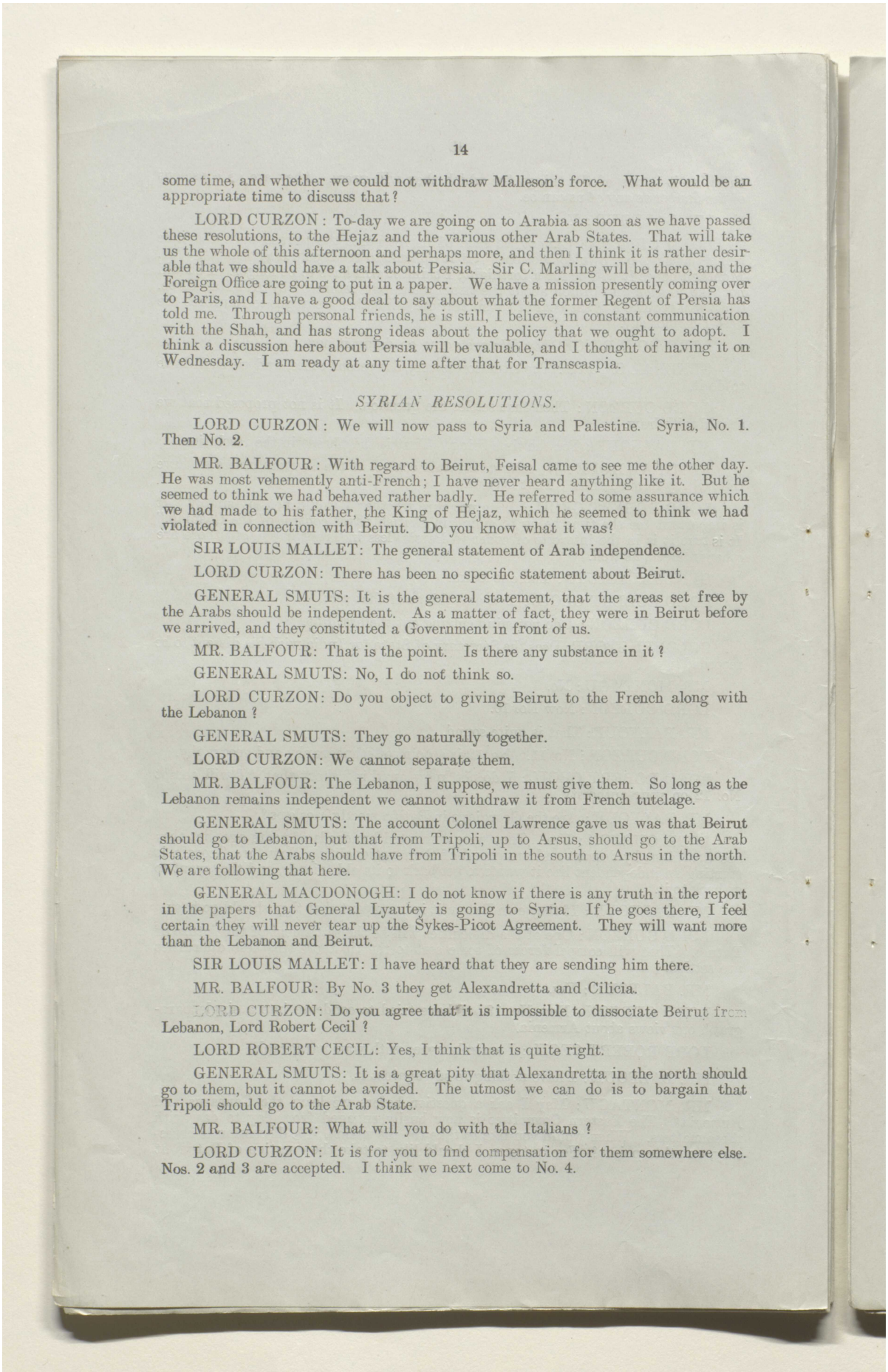

some time, and whether we could not withdraw Malleson's force. What would be an appropriate time to discuss that?

LORD CURZON: To-day we are going on to Arabia as soon as we have passed these resolutions, to the Hejaz and the various other Arab States. That will take us the whole of this afternoon and perhaps more, and then I think it is rather desirable that we should have a talk about Persia. Sir C. Marling will be there, and the Foreign Office are going to put in a paper. We have a mission presently coming over to Paris, and I have a good deal to say about what the former Regent of Persia has told me. Through personal friends, he is still, I believe, in constant communication with the Shah, and has strong ideas about the policy that we ought to adopt. I think a discussion here about Persia will be valuable, and I thought of having it on Wednesday. I am ready at any time after that for Transcaspia.

SYRIAN RESOLUTIONS.

LORD CURZON: We will now pass to Syria and Palestine. Syria, No. 1. Then No. 2.

MR. BALFOUR: With regard to Beirut, Feisal came to see me the other day. He was most vehemently anti-French; I have never heard anything like it. But he seemed to think we had behaved rather badly. He referred to some assurance which we had made to his father, the King of Hejaz, which he seemed to think we had violated in connection with Beirut. Do you know what it was?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: The general statement of Arab independence.

LORD CURZON: There has been no specific statement about Beirut.

GENERAL SMUTS: It is the general statement, that the areas set free by the Arabs should be independent. As a matter of fact, they were in Beirut before we arrived, and they constituted a Government in front of us.

MR. BALFOUR: That is the point. Is there any substance in it?

GENERAL SMUTS: No, I do not think so.

LORD CURZON: Do you object to giving Beirut to the French along with the Lebanon?

GENERAL SMUTS: They go naturally together.

LORD CURZON: We cannot separate them.

MR. BALFOUR: The Lebanon, I suppose, we must give them. So long as the Lebanon remains independent we cannot withdraw it from French tutelage.

GENERAL SMUTS: The account Colonel Lawrence gave us was that Beirut should go to Lebanon, but that from Tripoli, up to Arsus, should go to the Arab States, that the Arabs should have from Tripoli in the south to Arsus in the north. We are following that here.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I do not know if there is any truth in the report in the papers that General Lyautey is going to Syria. If he goes there, I feel certain they will never tear up the Sykes-Picot Agreement. They will want more than the Lebanon and Beirut.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: I have heard that they are sending him there.

MR. BALFOUR: By No. 3 they get Alexandretta and Cilicia.

LORD CURZON: Do you agree that it is impossible to dissociate Beirut from Lebanon, Lord Robert Cecil?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, I think that is quite right.

GENERAL SMUTS: It is a great pity that Alexandretta in the north should go to them, but it cannot be avoided. The utmost we can do is to bargain that Tripoli should go to the Arab State.

MR. BALFOUR: What will you do with the Italians?

LORD CURZON: It is for you to find compensation for them somewhere else. Nos. 2 and 3 are accepted. I think we next come to No. 4.

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MR. BALFOUR: I must put in a plea about the Italians. This is by way of being advice, as I understand it, which we give to the Cabinet?

LORD CURZON: Yes.

MR. BALFOUR: It is impossible to consider these things wholly apart from treaties by which we are solemnly bound to give compensation to Italy in Asia Minor for anything France gets in the Eastern Mediterranean. That is a more solemn treaty, if anything, than the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like to do something which will surprise Lord Curzon. I should like to let Cyprus be independent, and Italy be the protecting Power.

MR. BALFOUR: That would not console her at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Give her a position in the Eastern Mediterranean.

LORD CURZON: That is unthinkable.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not take Lord Curzon's view about Cyprus, but I have kept it in my own mind as a possible pawn for dealing with Greece.

LORD CURZON: Please do not!

MR. BALFOUR: That would have an ethnological justification. To hand it over to Italy has no justification at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not see anything the matter with our answer to Italy: "If you like to have Anatolia on the same terms on which we are going to have Arabia, you can have it."

LORD CURZON: That is self-determination by the people?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. We could say "We cannot give you anything, but that is because you have chosen to ask such an unreasonable thing."

MR. BALFOUR: Yes. I simply wanted to put in a *caveat*————

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The time has come for some candid friend to say to the Italians: "You are in a fair way to make yourselves the most detested people in the whole of Europe; you have quarrelled with the Greeks, with the Slavs, and with the French; you are in process of quarrelling with us, and you have been at war with all the Germanic Powers: you really must try and rearrange your policy in a way that will not land you in a positive disaster." I would like to say that to Sonnino.

MR. BALFOUR: You must recollect, whatever we think of the Italian performances in the war, if they had not come in we should have been in a very embarrassing position.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Certainly we should, from a blockade point of view.

MR. BALFOUR: The price we paid them to prevent that embarrassment was the 1915 treaty. I cannot tolerate the idea that we get all the advantage, have the goods delivered, and then not pay the stipulated price. All I say is that we should put in "subject to fair arrangement being made with Italy." I want it to be noticed, because it was a tripartite arrangement as between France, Italy, and Britain, and it ought not to be put aside.

LORD CURZON: We have never discussed it here. We have looked upon it as a matter for yourself and the Foreign Office. We are dealing with Syria as the case is put before us. I took it that the whole of this was subject to whatever agreement you might think it necessary to arrive at with regard to Italy later on.

MR. BALFOUR: If that was put in as a phrase, I should be content.

LORD CURZON: We will put in a phrase at the end to meet you.

ADMIRAL HOPE: I suppose it is understood that the French will not be permitted to turn Alexandretta into a naval base, or fortify it in any way?

LORD CURZON: That would be contrary to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, if I remember aright. It was to be a free port, at any rate for ourselves.

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SIR LOUIS MALLET: I do not think there was anything said about it.

MR. BALFOUR: A "free port" is inconsistent with fortifications, is it not?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: Oh, no.

MR. BALFOUR: I think you ought to put in something about that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not like "political predominance," but it is probably true.

MR. BALFOUR: What other phrase would you suggest?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Some such nebulous phrase as a "special position."

MR. BALFOUR: I suppose you ought to use the same phrase with regard to that which you propose to use in other cases.

LORD CURZON: I have used the same phrase more than once all the way through. You would add then that "the French should not be permitted to fortify Alexandretta."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: My conception of the whole thing is utterly inconsistent with the French being allowed to fortify any of these places.

LORD CURZON: Yes, and that is in my mind also. But how would you state it? I think it is worth while putting it down, if it is not in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

MR. BALFOUR: "It being understood that predominance does not carry with it the right to fortify"—will that do?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: With regard to "political predominance," in the paper we have just approved as to the Caucasus, it is suggested that perhaps America might be the protecting Power of Armenia. If America is the protecting Power of Armenia, she would be the protecting Power of Cilicia. In that case, the whole Bay of Iskanderun could not very well be under French political predominance.

LORD CURZON: The American base for Cilicia or Armenia would be Mersina. I have assumed all through, and I think Mr. Balfour has told us, that with this unhappy Sykes-Picot Agreement round our necks under no conditions would it be possible to persuade the French to give up Alexandretta.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: In the Paper I put before the War Cabinet on the 28th October I suggested that the limit of French predominance should be from Payas to Arsus. That only gives them the eastern shore of the Gulf of Iskanderun, and the remainder of the Gulf of Iskanderun would naturally fall to the Power protecting Armenia.

LORD CURZON: When I said "the Bay of Iskanderun," I did not mean to include every shore of it; I meant the eastern side.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Ought not that to be stated? Otherwise it would include the west shore of the Gulf.

GENERAL SMUTS: Strike out "in the Bay of Iskanderun."

LORD CURZON: Yes, we will strike that out because it is too indefinite.

MR. BALFOUR: If you add the words, "and in Cilicia," that carries with it the west.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: That is what I am drawing attention to. As stated it is rather too strong, "the Bay of Iskanderun and in Cilicia," because it is conceivable America might be responsible for Armenia, and therefore Cilicia.

LORD CURZON: Why not strike out Cilicia altogether, because it has been dealt with by the resolutions we have passed with regard to Armenia? Why not confine it to Alexandretta? "We should support the French claims to political predominance in Alexandretta," and then take Mr. Balfour's words, "it being understood," and so on.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would like to put Mr. Balfour's words at the end of resolution 6: "In accordance with the Anglo-French Declaration of November

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1916, the principle of self-determination should be made as far as possible the basis of settlement of the Syrian question. In no case should the French be allowed to utilise their political predominance in order to fortify any of the ports mentioned."

LORD CURZON: Let us say: "It is accordingly expressly understood that the enjoyment of a special political position does not carry with it the right to fortify any of the Syrian ports concerned."

(No. 7 was then omitted, and No. 8 was accepted with a slight alteration.)

PALESTINE RESOLUTIONS.

LORD CURZON: So much for Syria. Can we now run through the resolutions with regard to Palestine? No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4.

MR. BALFOUR: May I say upon that that, of course, the Zionists are vehement upon it. I cannot prevent them always running their show personally, and I know the Prime Minister is strong upon it. I do not feel nearly so certain that it is right. It will be said at once, "This means you are going to control Palestine, and largely—not indeed for pecuniary, but for strategical reasons—you will regard Palestine as a gate to Egypt, and you will want to have control there, and you will have to add that to the things Britain is going to get out of the general division of enemy territory." I think that is an argument that may be used unpleasantly against us.

GENERAL SMUTS: We should not claim it in any case.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: My own feeling was that it was stated rather too moderately.

LORD CURZON: The matter will be settled by the principle of self-determination. You have spoken about the strong pressure exercised by the Zionists. An equally strong pressure will be exercised by the Arabs. In a telegram I saw a day or two ago it was stated that we should bear in mind, when considering the claims the Zionists put forward, that their total proportion is 66,000, or something to that effect, while the Arabs number 673,000.

GENERAL SMUTS: Between 500,000 and 600,000.

LORD ROBERT CECIL. What I feel is that it is perfectly fantastic for us to be in all the rest of Arabia as the mandatory Power and not in Palestine. If the Americans are put into Palestine they will get into the most awful confusion.

GENERAL SMUTS: I do not think we should claim this ourselves.

MR. MONTAGU: Is it worth while putting in at the top of these clauses a general resolution that it is understood that Turkey has nothing to do with these countries any more than a titular interest?

MR. BALFOUR: Yes. Anything you say against Turkey has my hearty assent.

LORD CURZON: I assumed that. We did not put it in in the case of Mesopotamia, but I am ready to do so. You wanted something about the Italians in Syria, Mr. Balfour, did you not?

MR. BALFOUR: May I ask if you think you are safe in regard to No. 6? No. 6 says you must readjust the boundaries of Palestine. I think it ought to be done, but are you allowed to do it by the Sykes-Picot Agreement?

LORD CURZON: It has been understood by the French as well as ourselves that the boundary drawn between Palestine and Syria is untenable. It does not give to Palestine the Old Palestine.

(The Resolutions were then passed with the addition of one about the claims of Italy.)

ARABIA.

LORD CURZON: Are we prepared to embark now upon the Arabian question, which is an important one? It consists of two main parts. There is, firstly, what is to be our attitude towards Hussein, the relations that we are to endeavour to

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set up with him after the war, the sort of treaty, if any, we should conclude with him or with the Powers, the degree to which we should encourage, or discourage, or prohibit, or qualify his relations with foreign Powers. Secondly, there is the question of the degree to which we should encourage, discourage, negatively support, or actively resist the pretensions he puts forward to the overlordship of the whole of Arabia. These are important issues, and I think it is desirable that this Committee should discuss them. I am prepared to start now if the Committee approves.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If you are prepared to make a statement of the case, we might take that and then adjourn.

LORD CURZON: Very well. My statement will be quite brief.

As regards our pledges to the King of the Hejaz, they have been more or less referred to in our previous discussions. There was first the general series of pledges as regards Arab independence, which, as we have heard, he is likely to interpret in their most extreme and advanced sense. Secondly, there were the more specific pledges given to him in the well-known and rather regrettable correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and himself. I need not recapitulate them, because the words have more than once been under our attention here. As regards the attitude of King Hussein, he appears to alternate between fits of general amiability and extreme sulkiness. When he is amiable all goes well; when he is sulky he threatens to abdicate. And there is this to be said about his threats of abdication, that, being an elderly man and, I believe, addicted to religious pursuits, it is conceivable that he might carry out his threats. Then we should be confronted with a condition of affairs in which not only should we lose the advantage of his personality, prestige, and general character, all of which are considerable, but we should also be face to face with the warring jealousies both of his sons and of their various rivals. Therefore I assume that our general policy must be guided by the desirability, as far as possible, of keeping Hussein, of humouring him, and retaining the advantage of his personality and spiritual authority, quite apart from his political position, in the conditions that arise after the war. Into this question comes the minor issue of the title that he has been given, the further title that he has assumed, and the new title, if such a one has to be discovered, which should be conceded to him when all these new arrangements take place. I will allude to that more specifically when we come to his claim to overlordship over the whole of Arabia. The question of his exact title will be largely affected by the decision arrived at about Mesopotamia, and before any final conclusion is come to on that point we must await the views of the various communities in Irak, which are being sought by our political officers there.

Now, as regards other European influences. The two Powers that are certain to put forward claims in this respect are France and Italy. Earlier in the war, about a year ago, the Foreign Office was in communication with the French, and was endeavouring to negotiate a general Agreement with them, which reached the stage of what is called a *projet d'arrangement*, but never got beyond that. That draft Agreement, therefore, has no legal or juridical value, but it has to be borne in mind that, while it contained several features unfavourable, and unpalatable to ourselves, it did on the other hand contain on the part of the French, what had already figured in previous correspondence, namely, a definite admission of our superior political interests in Arabia. That must be the basis upon which we shall argue in any discussions with the French.

But if we look at the matter rather more closely, I do not think it is difficult to form some kind of idea as to the lines upon which we should proceed. First comes the very important question—on which there appears to be some difference of opinion between the Foreign Office and the India Office—whether, assuming that we are conceded a superiority of political interest in Arabia generally, we ought to translate that into any claim to have charge of the political relations of the King of the Hejaz. In some of the Foreign Office Papers I think I detected an inclination to press that his political relations should be in our hands. The India Office, on the other hand, dissuade that attitude, and I am disposed to think that there would be considerable difficulty in pressing successfully for it. Very great jealousy will be aroused by any arrangement we make with King Hussein. Special claims for ourselves there will be met by corresponding claims on the part of some of our Allies for similar positions there or elsewhere, and I am not certain that, as suggested

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in some of the Papers, we ought not to rely upon our general position in Arabia (assuming that our priority and superiority are there admitted) to carry us through with Hussein, rather than upon any political treaty or agreement, which will confine the conduct of the political relations of his Court in our hands. I merely say that in passing, and it binds nobody but myself. I suppose what we want to secure is, as far as possible, that the interests of other Powers shall be confined to the subject of their pilgrims. They have a right to a voice in those matters, whether they be the French, the Italians, or other Powers. I assume, in those circumstances that we should not try to prevent their having Consular representatives at Jeddah, or wherever is considered desirable, in order to look after their pilgrim traffic. What I do think is important is that we should not allow any of these representatives to have a diplomatic status. Whether we do or do not disqualify ourselves from having a Resident there, no other Power should exercise diplomatic functions of any sort, through its representative, with King Hussein.

A point that is not alluded to in any of the Papers, which seems to me of some importance, is this: what is going to happen, when the war is over, about subsidies and arms? This rebellion of the Sherif was to a large extent organised, and it has been almost entirely financed, by ourselves. What our total financial obligations have been I do not know, but they must have been very large, and we are going on paying the subsidy now. When the war is at an end, what is to happen about a subsidy? Will Hussein, who will continue to want money perhaps on an even larger scale (if his ambitions extend) than he receives now, come and say, "You must continue to subsidise me," or will he come to the French and ourselves and say, "Both of you must subsidise me"?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No.

LORD CURZON: Should we contemplate an arrangement like that with the Amir of Afghanistan, where the subsidy is provided exclusively by ourselves? We would not tolerate a treaty by which the Amir could be allowed to take a subsidy from anybody else. Is that the kind of relation we are going to endeavour to create with King Hussein? I merely throw out these points for examination by the India Office and the Foreign Office. Further, there is the question of arms. What restrictions are we going to place upon the importation of arms in the future? If he wants European arms, are we going to supply him? Are other Powers going to be allowed to do it? Is a treaty to be negotiated which contains restrictions in these respects? These points touch and turn upon the larger issue of the Power that is to be in general political control in the Hejaz, and they will have to be discussed and decided in that light.

One thing we must not do, and this is a commonplace of our policy, we must not touch with the end of a barge-pole the question of the Khalifate. That is a matter exclusively for the Moslem world; whether they choose to elect King Hussein or anybody else does not seem to me to concern us. Of course, it would concern us in this sense, that it is a very material thing in India and the countries we influence to know to whom they look as Khalif, and it might be in our interest, if King Hussein succeeds in establishing his power, that he should be Khalif. All I mean is, that at the moment we should take no active steps to influence the decision. We should accept it whatever form it takes, hoping, now that the Sultan of Turkey has disappeared from the stage, that it may take the form of being offered to the Sherif of Mecca.

The only other point upon which I want to say a word is the claim to overlordship or suzerainty of King Hussein over the whole of Arabia. The position is this, as I understand it. From the start King Hussein has been shrewd enough upon almost every occasion, either directly or by application, to make the claim on his own behalf that he is to be the Sovereign of all Arabia, of all the Arab countries; and, indeed, when Colonel Lawrence came here he told us that the title which he bears in Arab countries, which was conferred upon him by an assembly of notables and the Ulema at Mecca in the early days of the war, and which was afterwards repeated at his coronation, is "The King of the Arab countries," in itself an indication of the full extent of the claim he puts forward. On the other hand, I believe I am right in saying that, wide and sometimes rather perilous as have been the admissions that we have made about the independence of Arabia and the Arabs, we have not at any time said anything that commits us to a recognition of the full claims of King Hussein to which I have been referring. And, indeed, even if we were disposed to do so, the task is becoming increasingly difficult, as we find that public opinion in Mesopotamia, as reported to us, is veering away from the Sherif

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rather than towards him. The Committee will remember that a week or two ago we sent out telegrams to Captain Wilson, asking him to consult Miss Bell and others, and soliciting an opinion from the various communities there as to whether they did or did not favour a single Arab State, and, if they did, whether they would like it to be under the suzerainty, nominal or otherwise, of one of the sons of the King of the Hejaz. It was indicated at that time that there was a local feeling (which I, for my part, was inclined to think might grow) in favour of Abdullah. Since then we have been told in Captain Wilson's telegrams (which are seen by Miss Bell, to whose opinion we attach great value, and reflect her view as well as Captain Wilson's) that there is an increasing reluctance on the part of Mesopotamia to have anything to do with the Sherif at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think they indicate rather an increasing desire that they should be under British control.

LORD CURZON: That may be. That is Captain Wilson's own view; he looks at the case from the point of view of a British protectorate.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: There is a new telegram to-day, which is a kind of *ad interim* reply to our enquiry. Captain Wilson has tried several districts, and they are all dead against an Arab Amir at all. They do not want anybody at all. They want to have one State, and do not want to be ruled over by any Arab Amir. They say they have not escaped from the tyranny of the Turk in order to be submitted to the tyranny of the Arab.

LORD CURZON: That is significant, and we will deal with it later. Your last remark brings me to what I intended to be my concluding observation. It is a point which has not been sufficiently made here before. You were saying that these people do not want to exchange Turkish rule for the Arab rule, the Turkish Sultan for an Arab Amir. Have we sufficiently considered the possible danger of creating a great Arabian State in the whole of these countries—viewed not merely by itself, but in its possible relation to what may be happening further north? The most difficult aspect of the Caucasian case is the Tartar and the Turki element there. Many of us view with great apprehension, although we do not know how we are to avoid it, the creation of some sort of Turkish autonomous State in the regions of the Caucasus. I am speaking of the neighbourhood of Baku, Azerbaijan, and so on. If such a State is set up, we know exactly what its ambitions will be. It will endeavour to absorb Persian Azerbaijan, it will seek to create a fresh nucleus of Turkish feeling and agitation in that part of the world. Putting aside the ethnographical aspect of the case, and looking to the religious aspect alone, there will be an attempt to create a great Moslem community there. Would it be altogether wise, on the southern side of that area, to set up by any action of our own, or by the use of our influence in that quarter, what will be another great Moslem community? It is true the Arabs are different from the Turks. The Arabs of Lower Mesopotamia are Shiahs, whereas the bulk of the Turks are Sunnis, but if we do anything prematurely to build up a great Arab State under a single head we may rue the day, and in the future we might find there had been evolved a great community, though not necessarily under a single head, based upon principles of a fanatical and very likely an aggressive form of Islam, which might become a serious danger. Thinking over this matter, I am inclined to feel that the solution of these difficulties does not lie in encouraging King Hussein to the kind of position to which he aspires, but rather the reverse. I think that is all I need say in opening the case about Hussein. There are twenty different facets of it which I might discuss, but I have limited myself to the broad considerations underlying the whole of our policy, whatever form it may ultimately take.

MR. MONTAGU: There is one thing I should like to ask. In discussing Hussein's relations to Mesopotamia, your remarks apply with equal force to his relations to Ibn Saud, the Idrisi, and all the people in the south?

LORD CURZON: As you know, we are proceeding on what is a rather arbitrary division into geographical areas. I was dealing with King Hussein apart, because I was going to take later on—perhaps not to-day—the question of the whole of these other chiefs, not only round the Gulf, but in the interior, including Ibn Saud. Of course, the relationship of the two is close

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MR. MONTAGU: You say you cannot encourage King Hussein to call himself the King of the Arab countries because of the difficulty of Mesopotamia. Would it not be equally true to say you cannot encourage him to do it because of the existence of these other chiefs in Arabia itself?

LORD CURZON: Yes, I think so. I said I would revert to the question of his title, but I do not think the title matters very much, to tell the truth. As he has been called the "King of the Arab countries" for two or three years, I should let him go on calling himself by that title, and I would leave him to establish his sovereignty if he could.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The French have rather rushed us in one way; they have made him a regular King and have given Feisal the title of Royal Highness. That was done by the French, and we could not be behind them while they did it. I should have thought, unless he pushes us very hard. it would be better to leave it. It is nothing to do with the Peace Conference, at any rate. It is only a question of what we choose to say about it. As to subsidies, I should like to know whether, if Feisal gets to Damascus, he cannot subsidise his father?

LORD CURZON: I was treating Hussein apart from his sons. I was assuming that Feisal, if he goes to Damascus, will look after himself. To a large extent he is independent of his father, and will be the head of a separate State.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: As Sir Louis Mallet points out to me, it is understood that the King is to get something out of it—a subsidy from Damascus.

LORD CURZON: Where is that to be found?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: On page 8 of this Paper.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: It is a conversation of Colonel Lawrence's with King Hussein.

LORD CURZON: It is King Hussein's expectations, that is all.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: It was stipulated in regard to Mesopotamia.

LORD CURZON: Yes, by Hussein; but we never committed ourselves about it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: He always had a subsidy from the Turks. The Hejaz is not a self-supporting place. Somebody has to subsidise him.

LORD CURZON: Have you any observations to make on the general statement of the case, Lord Robert?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No.

LORD CURZON: Did I state what is, on the whole, the Foreign Office view?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Of course, there is the question about the title, as to which, as you say, there is a difference of opinion as to what we ought to do. There is the question of his foreign relations, too. I agree myself that the less we control his foreign relations the better. On the other hand, it is plain we must take security that nobody else does control him or have anything to do with that except for the purpose of pilgrims.

LORD CURZON: That is the India Office point of view, is it not?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes. We are anxious to avoid controlling his foreign relations.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: There was no strong view expressed at the Committee about that. It was left open.

LORD CURZON: Will you give me the views of the two Offices on another point? Do you contemplate a treaty to be concluded with Hussein after the war?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Some kind of treaty, if we can get rid of the subsidy, of course. I think we shall have to have a treaty or some kind of agreement with him that he is not going to let anybody else run him.

LORD CURZON: Do you mean a treaty only with him, which is shown to the other Powers, or an agreement come to in consultation with them?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think it would be enough for us to give notice of it. If we go to France she will want to say something about it. I should like to think it over, but my present impression would be against an agreement with France.

LORD CURZON: When our representatives go to Paris, the French, before any long time has elapsed, will say, "We must have an agreement about the King of the Hejaz; you and we must settle this matter; the Italians must be kept out, and we must see what we can do."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should say this is a thing which we could not consult about in the absence of Italy.

LORD CURZON: That is interesting. Do you think, then, that we ought to have a discussion with France and Italy about the future of King Hussein and the Hejaz?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Either with both or neither.

MR. MONTAGU: If you have neither, do you not come near to establishing a protectorate?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, you do; you come to one of these *semi* things, that is to say a negative protectorate.

LORD CURZON: Like Afghanistan, where you give the title of King to the Amir and subsidise him?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: If you control his foreign relations, does not that amount to a protectorate?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would not go so far as that with the King of the Hejaz. I would say "You must not have any foreign relations with anybody."

LORD CURZON: Perhaps Sir Hamilton Grant may have something to say as to the views of the Government of India.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: The view of the Government of India is that they would like to see as little interference with the Hejaz as possible in the future, and that, on the whole, they would like to see the whole arrangements internationalised. If France, Italy and ourselves could combine to subsidise the King, so far as necessary, it should be done. We should then obviate the invidious position we should get into if we assumed sole control, and we should at the same time stop the other Powers from themselves intriguing in the Hejaz to our detriment. A tripartite arrangement of the three Powers, and a sharing between them of the subsidy, would probably be the simplest solution, and would relieve us of anxiety in the future, and probably be the most satisfactory solution to the Moslem world as a whole, who would realise that we were not intending ourselves to assume domination of the Holy Places.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Supposing that unfortunately there was a copper mine discovered in the Hejaz, would you allow anybody to exploit that?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think not, without the express request of King Hussein himself that some foreigner should come in and do it. I think all three Powers should be under a self-denying ordinance not to accept any concession except at the request of King Hussein, and with the consent of the other two Powers. We should regard it as a sort of closed territory.

LORD CURZON: There was something to that effect in one of the contemplated agreements, when M. Picot was in London and we were discussing commercial concessions in the Hejaz, that no one State should get any advantage of that sort without mentioning it to the others. As to the subsidy, a tripartite agreement no doubt would solve certain difficulties; it would make the burden easier for ourselves. But are you not a little afraid of the position it would authorise the Italians to take up? At the present moment their influence there is small, and their interference is not important; but supposing Italy is one of the three Powers to subsidise the King, and the King succeeds in establishing a considerable position over large areas of Arabia, would not Italy, as one of three Powers, have a voice?

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SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I quite see that, but at the same time we should probably be able to watch her better if we stood hand-in-hand with France in the matter than if we pushed her out altogether and left her to intrigue with the Idrisi and down the eastern littoral as she has done before. When Italy came into the war we had to take military action in the Red Sea which we should not have done otherwise, in order to anticipate probable action on the part of Italy, and leaving Italy out is not going to prevent her staking out claims on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. We had then to occupy certain islands. If we got her in on fair terms and as a signatory to a self-denying ordinance in the matter, she would be stopped from further intrigues better than if left out.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Our experience has not been that with Italy, so far, so much as with France. There was a Colonel Brémond there at an early stage of the war who did nothing but intrigue.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: We had not come to any agreement at that time.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And I do not think any agreement would stop Brémond.

LORD CURZON: I agree with the view of the Government of India as far as this, that it is desirable to make an arrangement with the French and the Italians about the Hejaz and about the way in which commercial concessions and similar matters are to be managed in the future. But I should be very reluctant to admit the Italians, or even the French, to sharing the subsidy; I should like to arrange the subsidy ourselves.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would like to get rid of the subsidy in the form of a tribute from Damascus, if that could be done, and then say, as far as our agreement with the French and Italians is concerned, it would be a self-denying agreement, and we would none of us interfere with the foreign relations of this gentleman except for strictly pilgrimage purposes, and that he would be bound himself in the same way not to allow any outside Power to deal with his foreign relations. What I do not want is to have a wretched competition between two Western Powers for the favours of an Oriental.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: If it really was a self-denying agreement that we would all keep to, would not that be better than that we should go in and the others be continually intriguing to get in behind our back?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It would be better. That is the best thing to be done, I am disposed to think. The difficulty is, the French have got their man Cherchali there; he is purely a commercial agent in practice; he is always planning something.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: The arms question would be simplified if we got both France and Italy in too.

LORD CURZON: We have been discussing these questions rather in the air; I have not seen any definite statement or suggestion of policy on behalf of the Foreign Office about Arabia. It is alluded to in a great many papers.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is dealt with in the Crowe-Toynbee Paper.

LORD CURZON: Mr. Montagu, have you any suggestion as to what should be done at the Peace Conference as regards treaties, subsidies, and arms?

MR. MONTAGU: Not about subsidies. There may be a trucial treaty on a commercial basis.

LORD CURZON: I hope we shall not do that with anybody except the Trucial Chiefs. I do not think the writer of the Paper understood what they are.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: The arms traffic question is being dealt with separately. An international convention is being drafted for discussion.

LORD CURZON: In the paragraph dealing with the Hejaz there is nothing indicating a very clear view of the Foreign Office as to what ought to be done.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, there is not. "In the Hejaz, then, British desiderata seem to be limited to the conclusion of a "Trucial Treaty" on a restricted basis, and for the maintenance of predominant influence we have to

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depend in part upon our present relations with King Hussein, our position in Egypt and the Red Sea, and the relations we hope to establish with the surrounding Arab countries."

LORD CURZON: We want something more precise than this. We want something about commercial concessions, banks, railways, subsidy, and arms.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: A series of draft treaties is being prepared in the Foreign Office covering the whole of this ground.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Yes, but when Mr. Balfour goes to Paris, supposing on an early date the French say, "We want to have a discussion with you as to how we are to settle this question of the King of the Hejaz," and Mr. Balfour is called upon to state our policy, he really will not find very full guidance in the references in this Paper. I had hoped from this discussion that we should have carried matters further. Although I believe there is general agreement here, I doubt if I have the material for drawing up a series of resolutions upon the brief discussion we have had.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think in any case it would be a very good thing if you would draw up resolutions, if you had time to do it, because they focus discussion and you get something definite and clear. We can do that in the Foreign Office, if you like.

LORD CURZON: Yes, if you will do it in the Foreign Office and see me about it, then we will submit a draft.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: I think we have got all the material. We have been discussing the question of treaties with Hurst.

LORD CURZON: Then we will take the rest of Arabia at our next meeting, and afterwards Persia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W.,
December 16, 1918.

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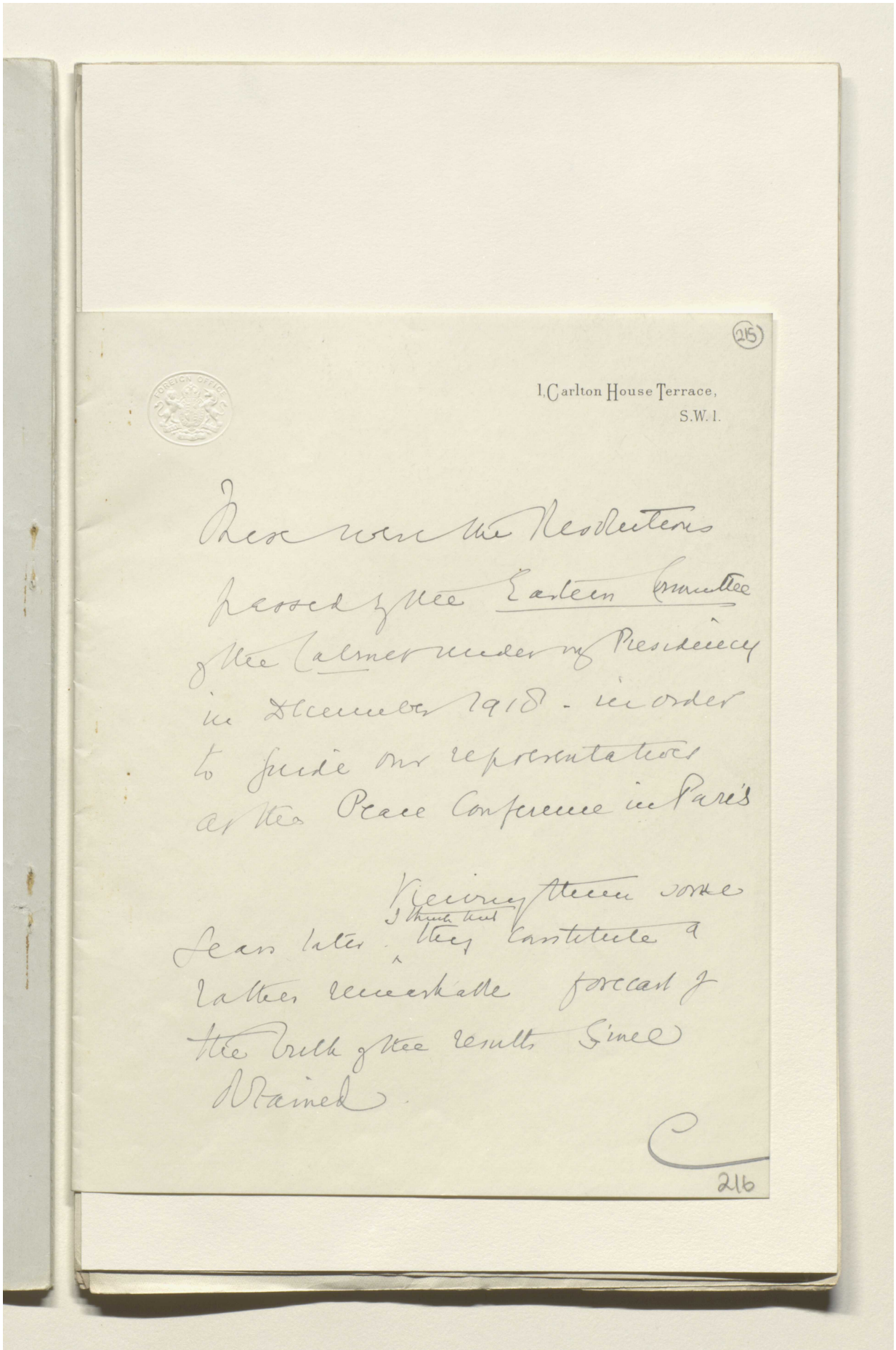

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1, Carlton House Terrace,
S.W. 1.

These were the Resolutions passed by the Eastern Committee of the Cabinet under my Presidency in December 1918 - in order to guide our representatives at the Peace Conference in Paris

Viewing them some years later, I think that they constitute a rather remarkable forecast of the bulk of the results since obtained.

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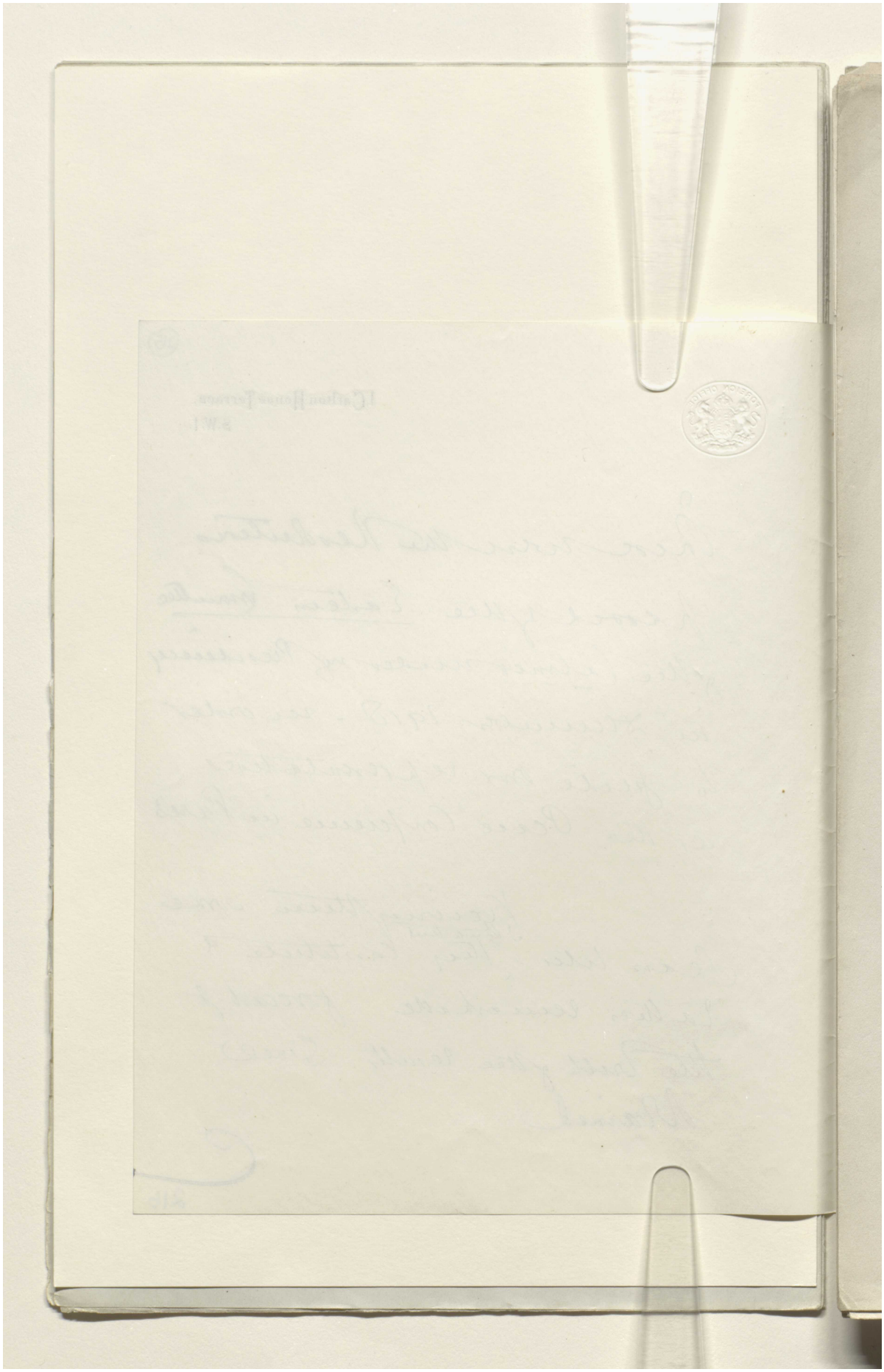

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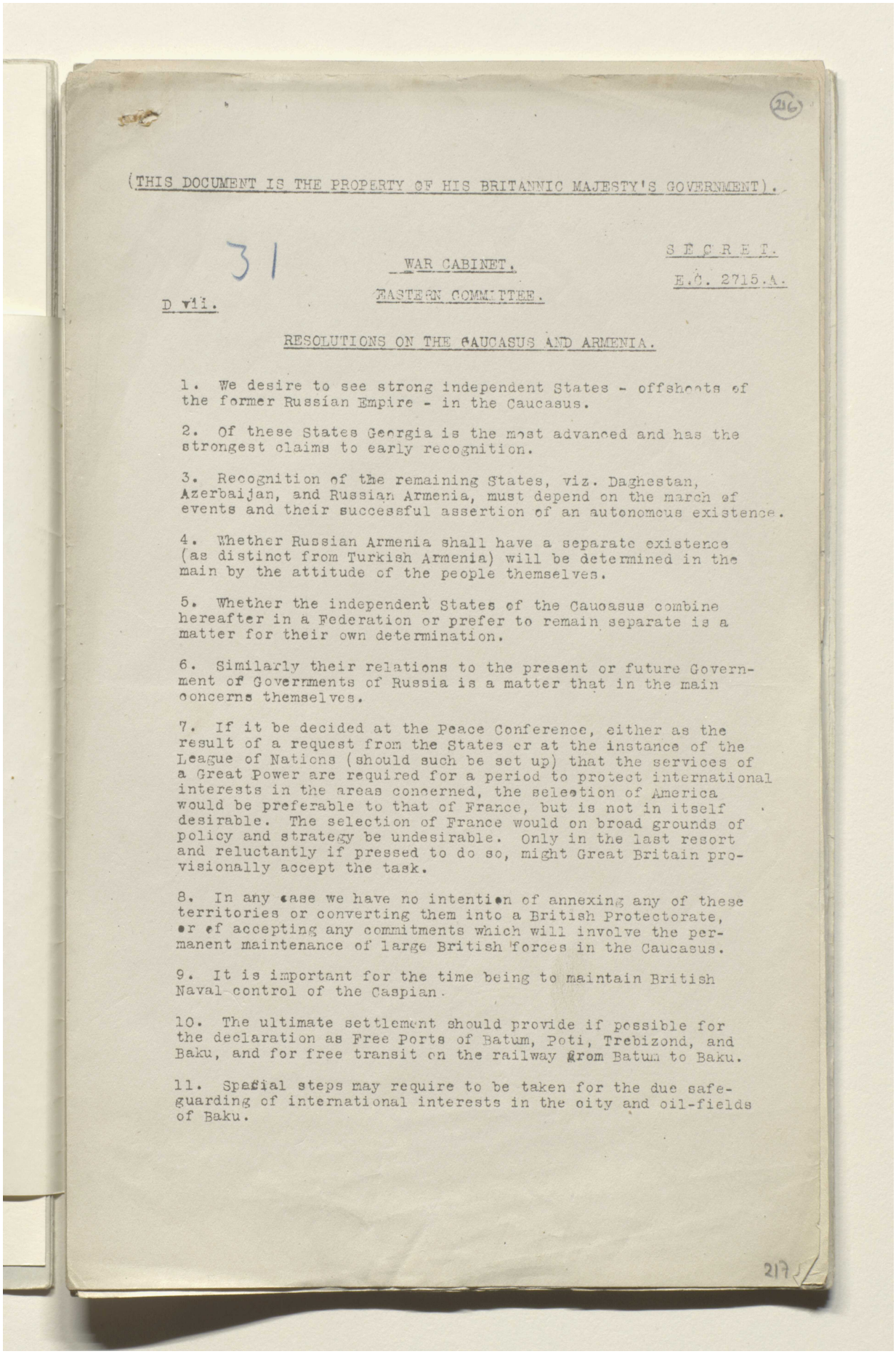

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31

WAR CABINET.

SECRET.

E.C. 2715.A.

D vii.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

RESOLUTIONS ON THE CAUCASUS AND ARMENIA.

1. We desire to see strong independent States - offshoots of the former Russian Empire - in the Caucasus.

2. Of these States Georgia is the most advanced and has the strongest claims to early recognition.

3. Recognition of the remaining States, viz. Daghestan, Azerbaijan, and Russian Armenia, must depend on the march of events and their successful assertion of an autonomous existence.

4. Whether Russian Armenia shall have a separate existence (as distinct from Turkish Armenia) will be determined in the main by the attitude of the people themselves.

5. Whether the independent States of the Caucasus combine hereafter in a Federation or prefer to remain separate is a matter for their own determination.

6. Similarly their relations to the present or future Government of Governments of Russia is a matter that in the main concerns themselves.

7. If it be decided at the Peace Conference, either as the result of a request from the States or at the instance of the League of Nations (should such be set up) that the services of a Great Power are required for a period to protect international interests in the areas concerned, the selection of America would be preferable to that of France, but is not in itself desirable. The selection of France would on broad grounds of policy and strategy be undesirable. Only in the last resort and reluctantly if pressed to do so, might Great Britain provisionally accept the task.

8. In any case we have no intention of annexing any of these territories or converting them into a British Protectorate, or of accepting any commitments which will involve the permanent maintenance of large British forces in the Caucasus.

9. It is important for the time being to maintain British Naval control of the Caspian.

10. The ultimate settlement should provide if possible for the declaration as Free Ports of Batum, Poti, Trebizond, and Baku, and for free transit on the railway from Batum to Baku.

11. Spafial steps may require to be taken for the due safeguarding of international interests in the city and oil-fields of Baku.

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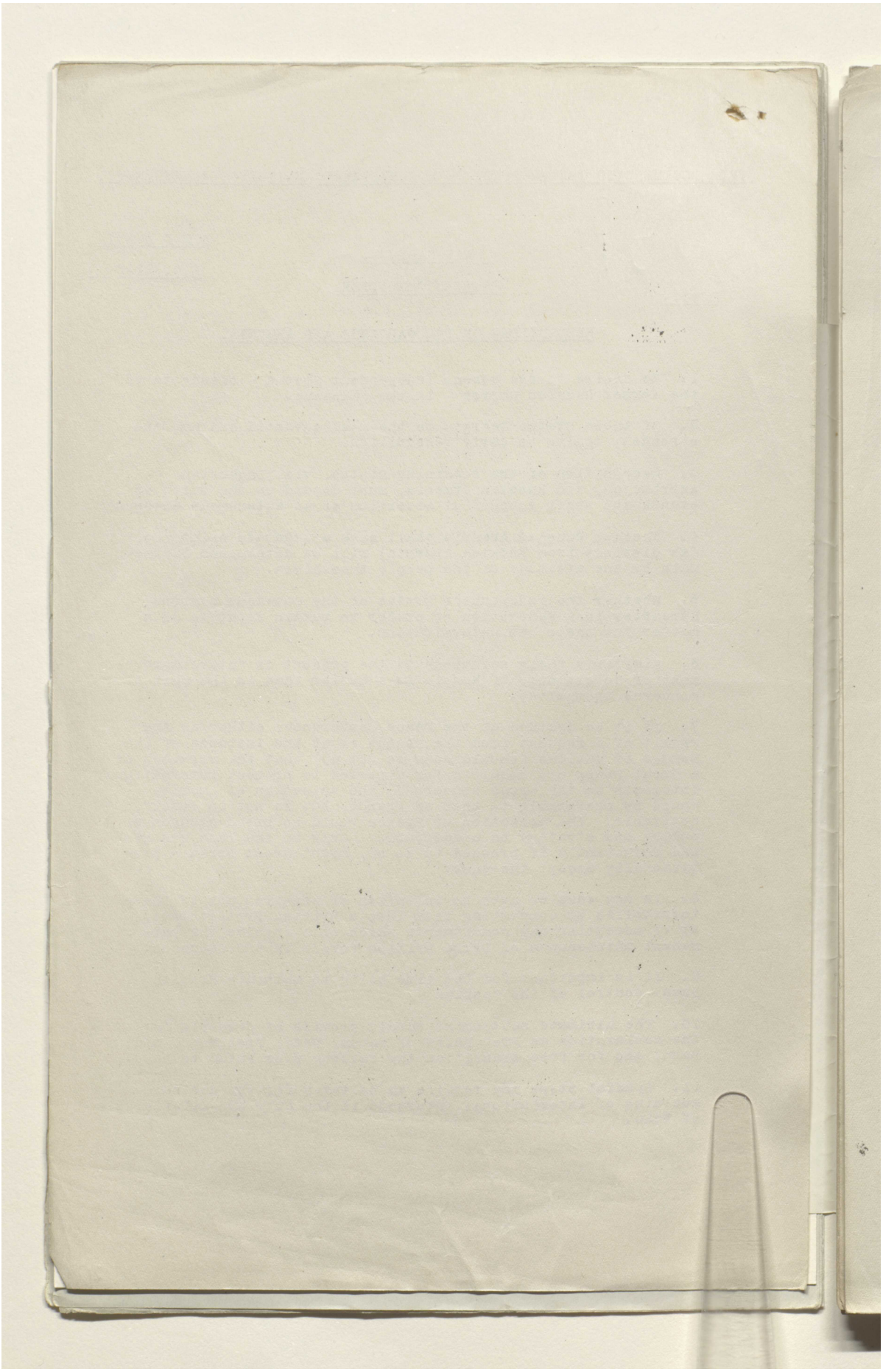

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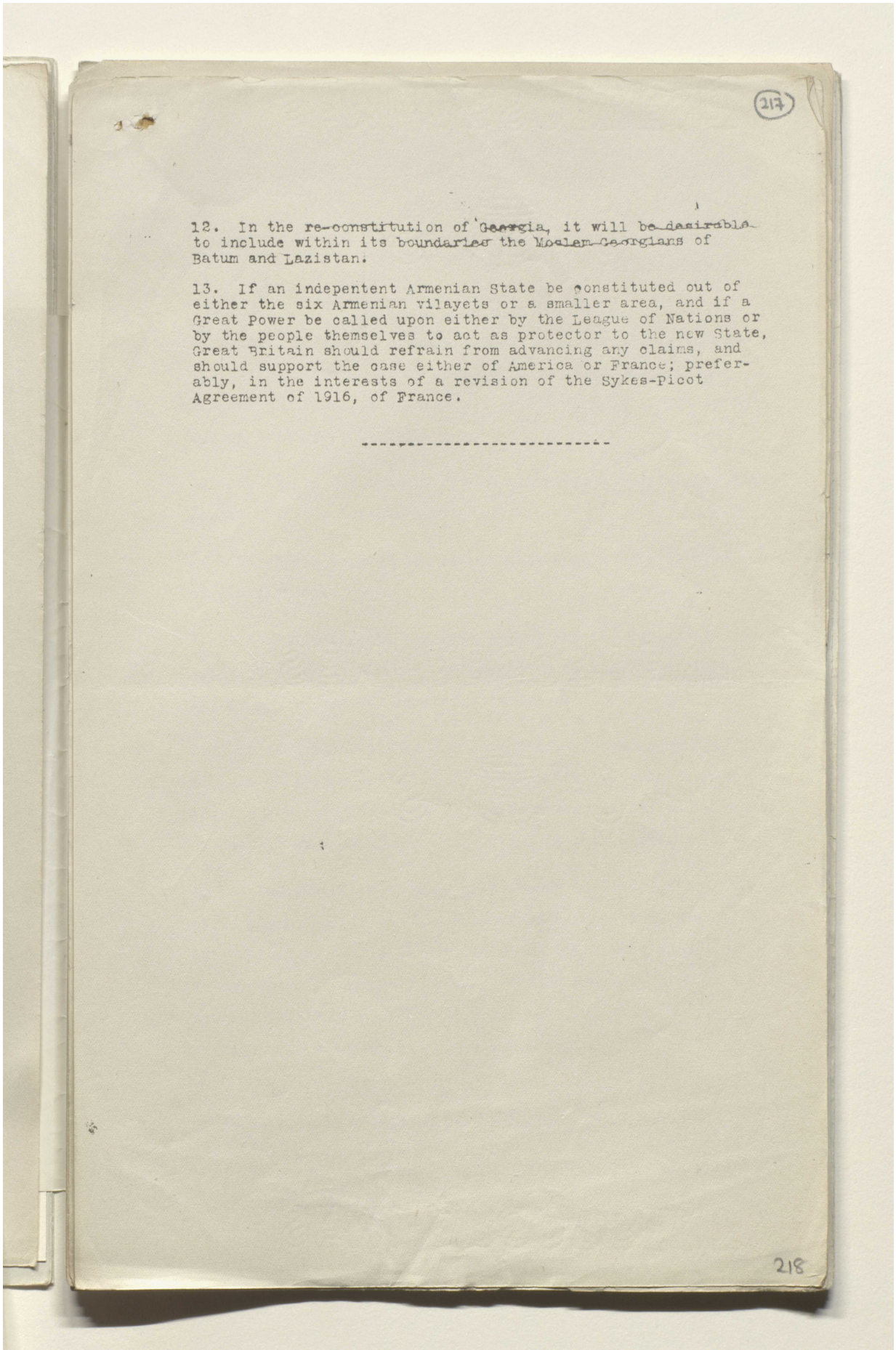

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12. In the re-constitution of ~~Georgia~~, it will ~~be desirable~~ to include within its ~~boundaries~~ the ~~Moslem Georgians~~ of Batum and Lazistan.

13. If an indepentent Armenian State be constituted out of either the six Armenian vilayets or a smaller area, and if a Great Power be called upon either by the League of Nations or by the people themselves to act as protector to the new State, Great Britain should refrain from advancing any claims, and should support the case either of America or France; preferably, in the interests of a revision of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, of France.

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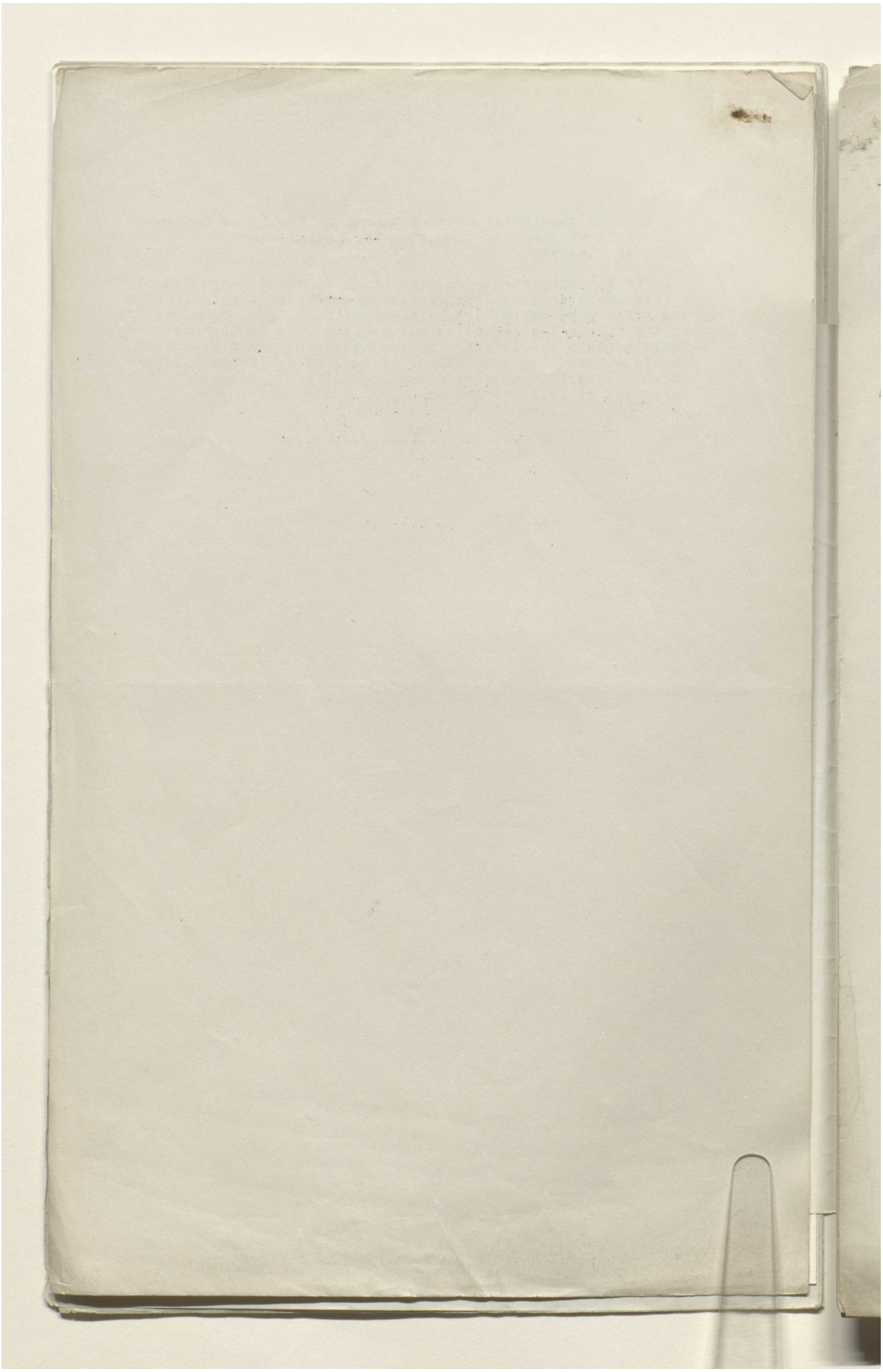

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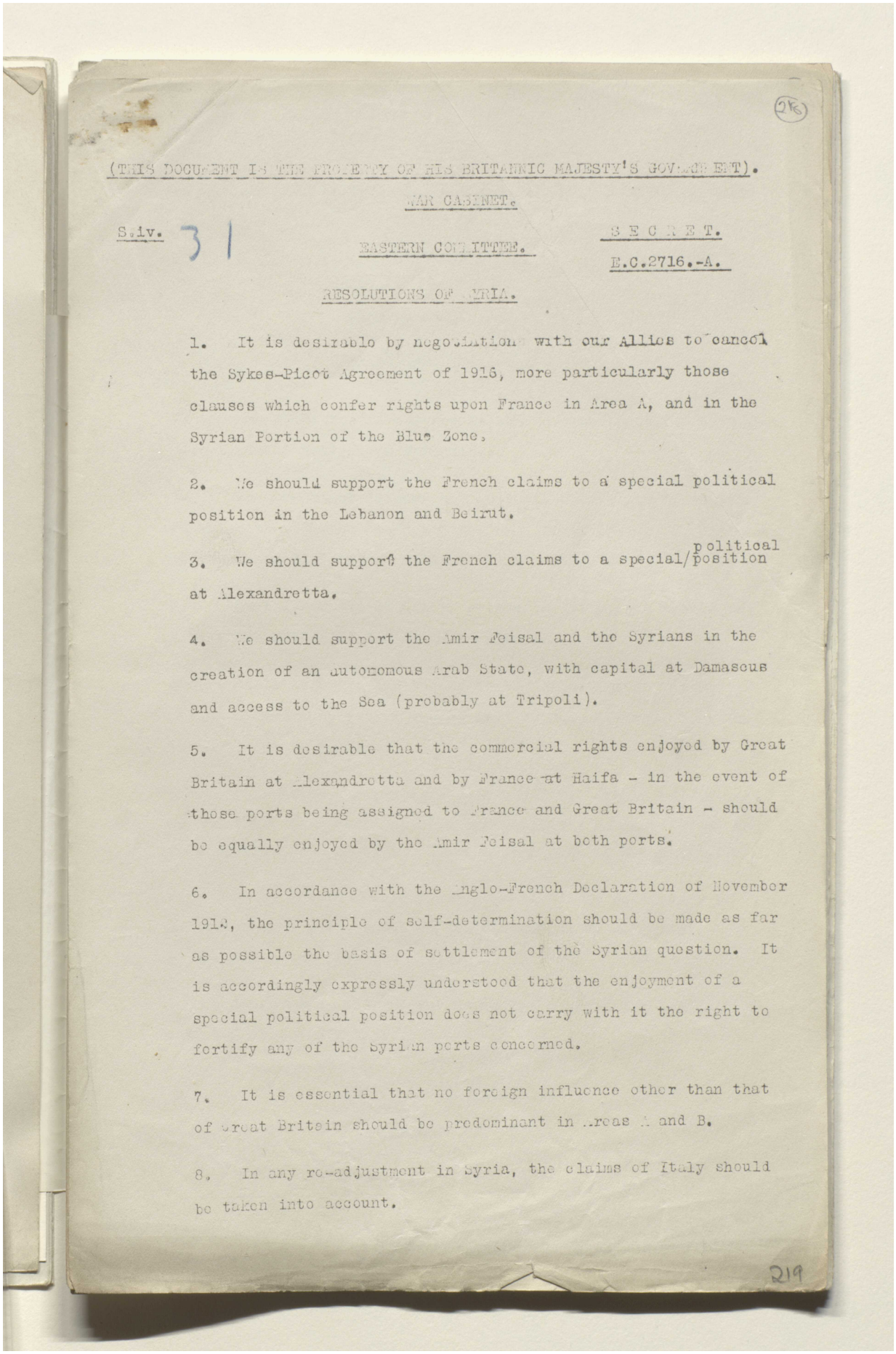

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WAR CABINET.

S.iv. 31

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

S E C R E T.

E.C.2716.-A.

RESOLUTIONS OF SYRIA.

1. It is desirable by negotiation with our Allies to cancel the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, more particularly those clauses which confer rights upon France in Area A, and in the Syrian Portion of the Blue Zone.

2. We should support the French claims to a special political position in the Lebanon and Beirut.

3. We should support the French claims to a special/political position at Alexandretta.

4. We should support the Amir Feisal and the Syrians in the creation of an autonomous Arab State, with capital at Damascus and access to the Sea (probably at Tripoli).

5. It is desirable that the commercial rights enjoyed by Great Britain at Alexandretta and by France at Haifa - in the event of those ports being assigned to France and Great Britain - should be equally enjoyed by the Amir Feisal at both ports.

6. In accordance with the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, the principle of self-determination should be made as far as possible the basis of settlement of the Syrian question. It is accordingly expressly understood that the enjoyment of a special political position does not carry with it the right to fortify any of the Syrian ports concerned.

7. It is essential that no foreign influence other than that of Great Britain should be predominant in Areas A and B.

8. In any re-adjustment in Syria, the claims of Italy should be taken into account.

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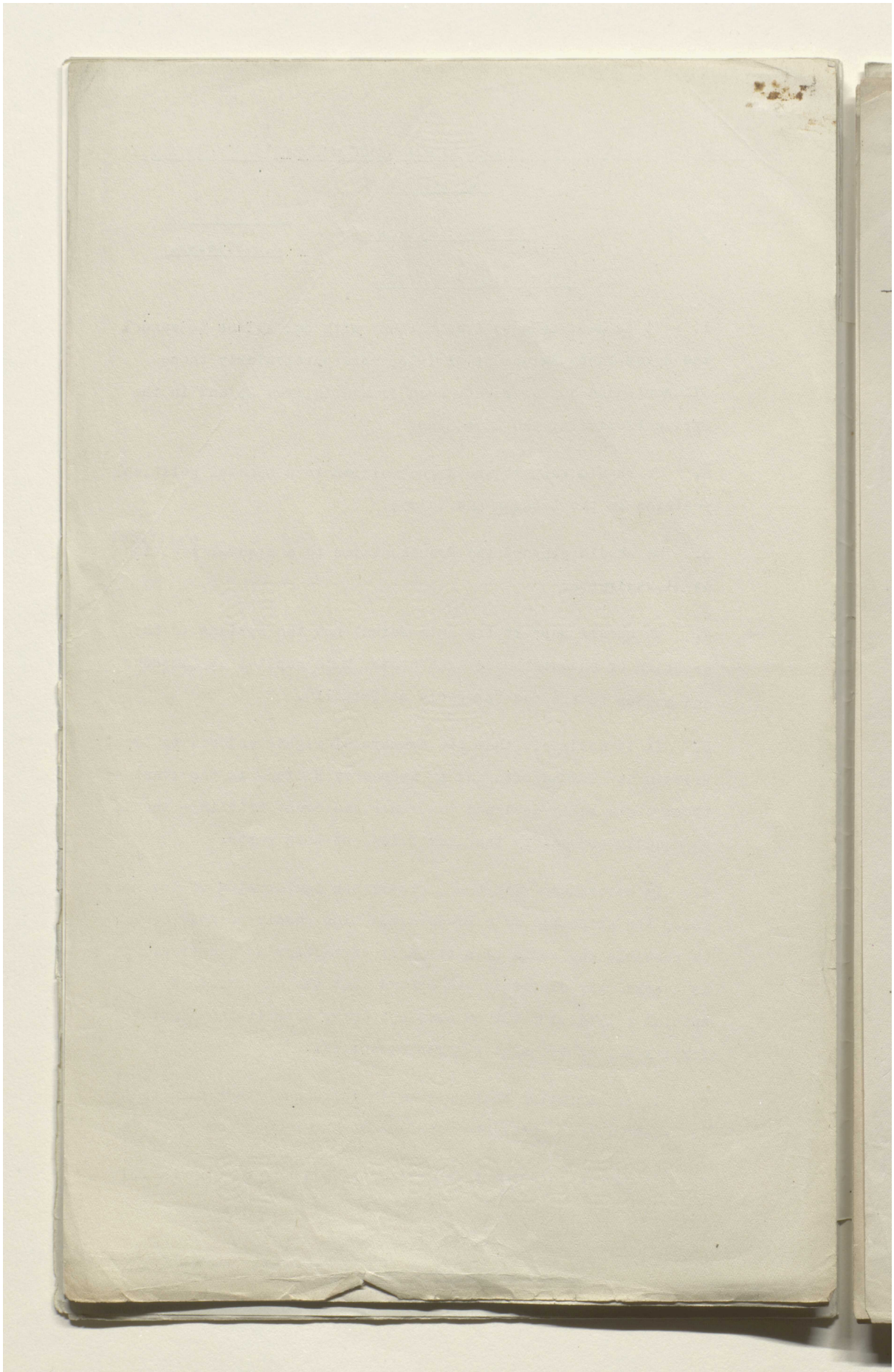

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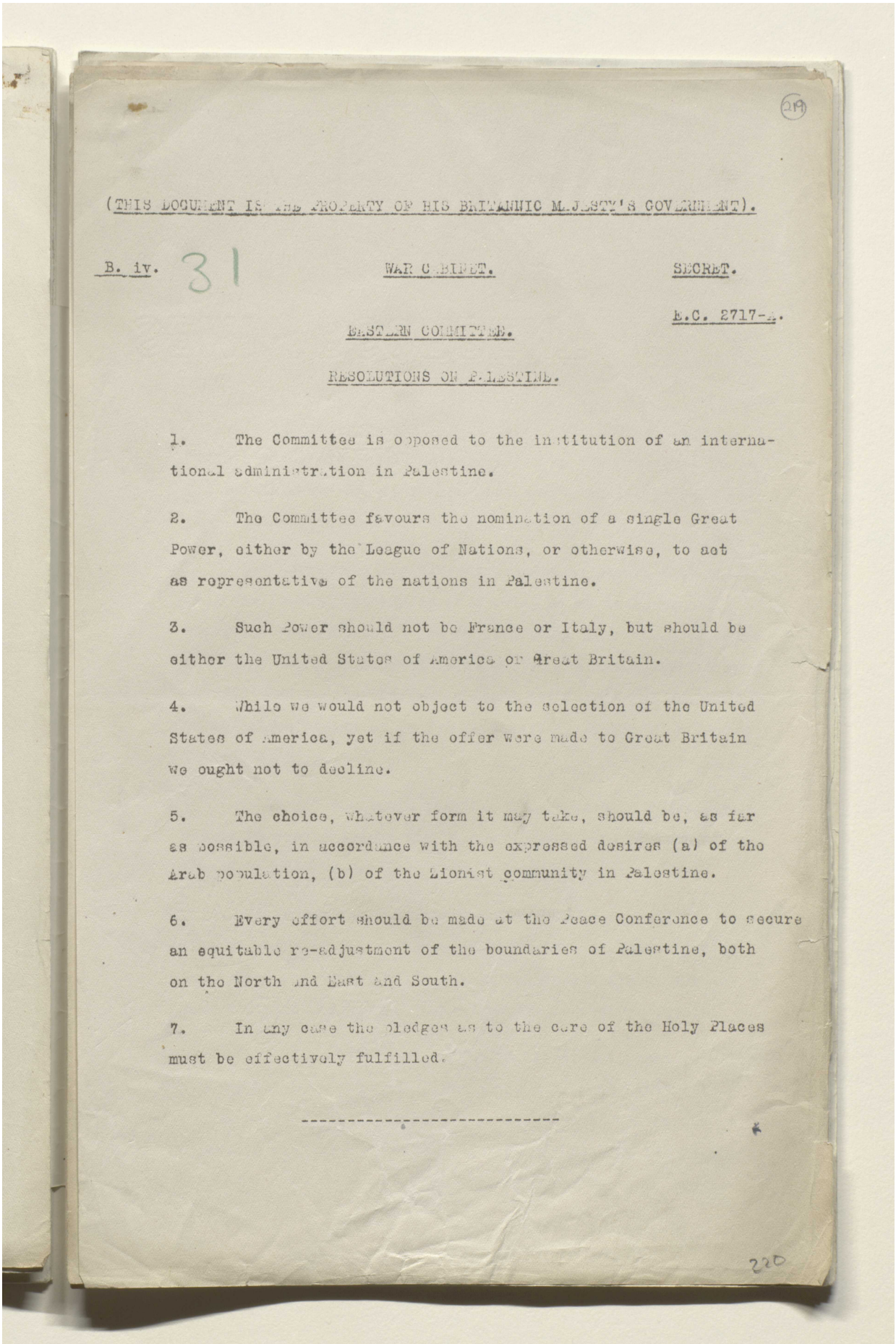

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B. iv. 31

WAR CABINET. SECRET.

E.C. 2717-A.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

RESOLUTIONS ON PALESTINE.

1. The Committee is opposed to the institution of an international administration in Palestine.

2. The Committee favours the nomination of a single Great Power, either by the League of Nations, or otherwise, to act as representative of the nations in Palestine.

3. Such Power should not be France or Italy, but should be either the United States of America or Great Britain.

4. While we would not object to the selection of the United States of America, yet if the offer were made to Great Britain we ought not to decline.

5. The choice, whatever form it may take, should be, as far as possible, in accordance with the expressed desires (a) of the Arab population, (b) of the Zionist community in Palestine.

6. Every effort should be made at the Peace Conference to secure an equitable re-adjustment of the boundaries of Palestine, both on the North and East and South.

7. In any case the pledges as to the care of the Holy Places must be effectively fulfilled.

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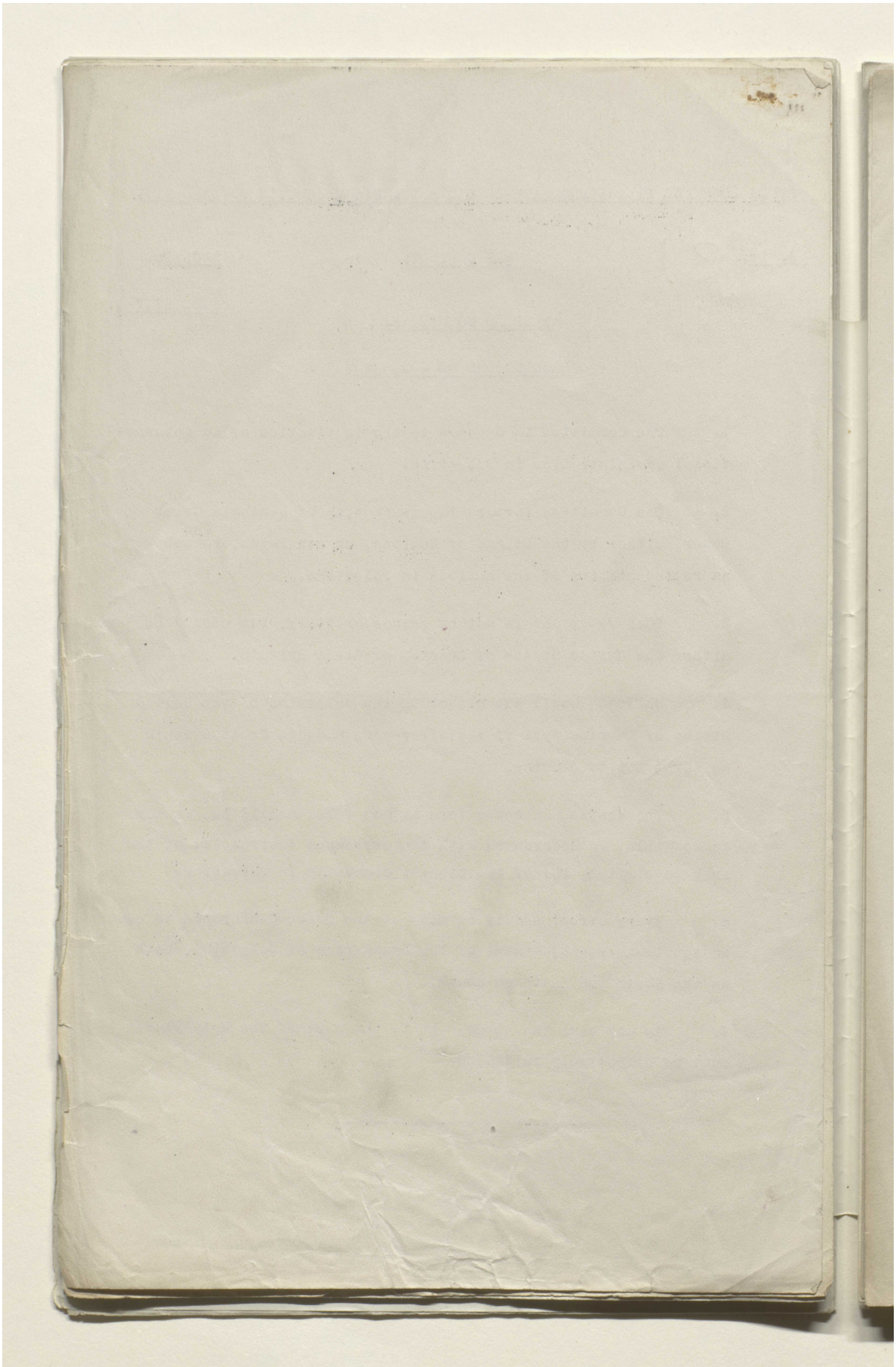

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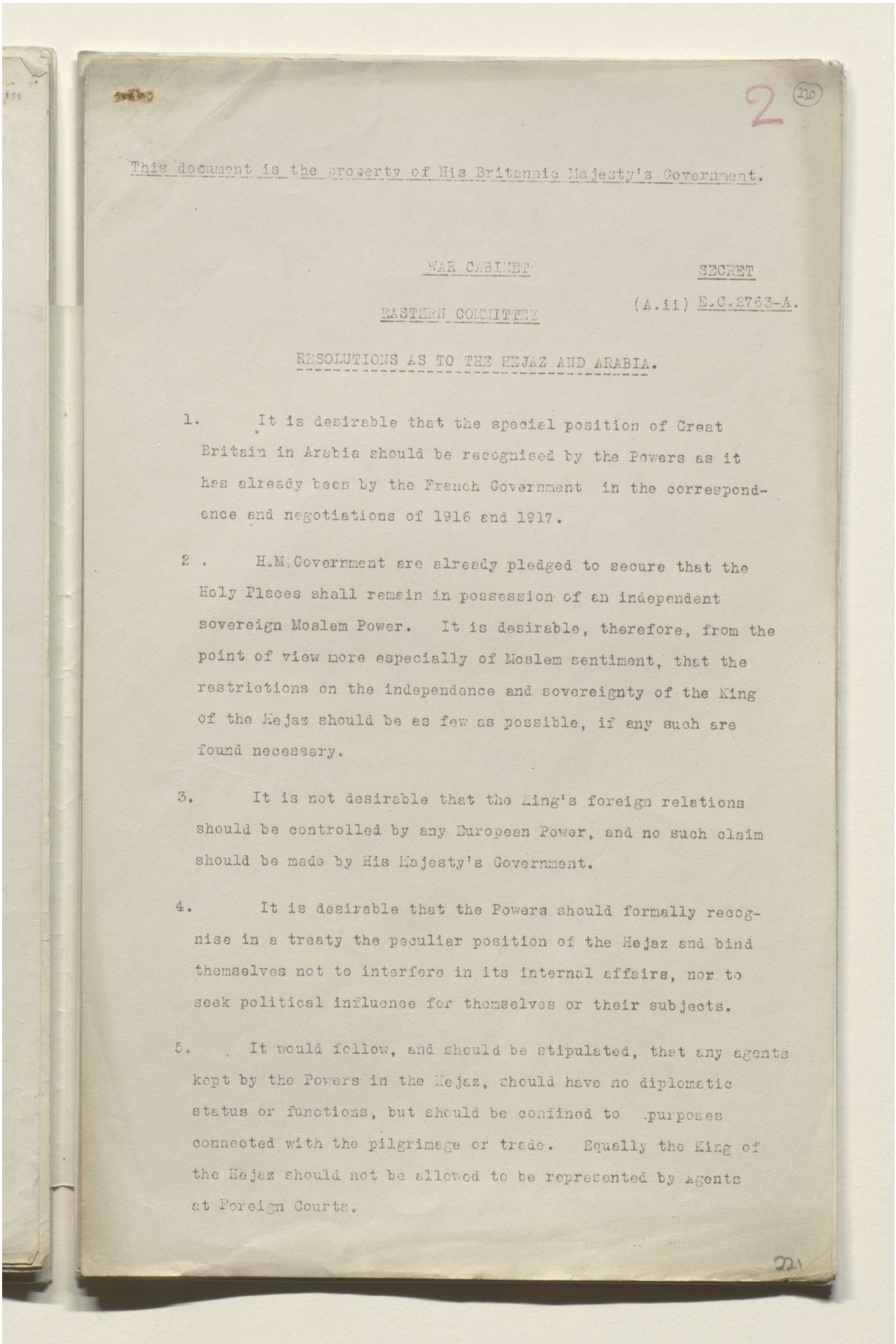

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WAR CABINET — SECRET

EASTERN COMMITTEE — (A.ii) E.C.2763-A.

RESOLUTIONS AS TO THE HEJAZ AND ARABIA.

1. It is desirable that the special position of Great Britain in Arabia should be recognised by the Powers as it has already been by the French Government in the correspondence and negotiations of 1916 and 1917.

2. H.M. Government are already pledged to secure that the Holy Places shall remain in possession of an independent sovereign Moslem Power. It is desirable, therefore, from the point of view more especially of Moslem sentiment, that the restrictions on the independence and sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz should be as few as possible, if any such are found necessary.

3. It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government.

4. It is desirable that the Powers should formally recognise in a treaty the peculiar position of the Hejaz and bind themselves not to interfere in its internal affairs, nor to seek political influence for themselves or their subjects.

5. It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agents kept by the Powers in the Hejaz, should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade. Equally the King of the Hejaz should not be allowed to be represented by Agents at Foreign Courts.

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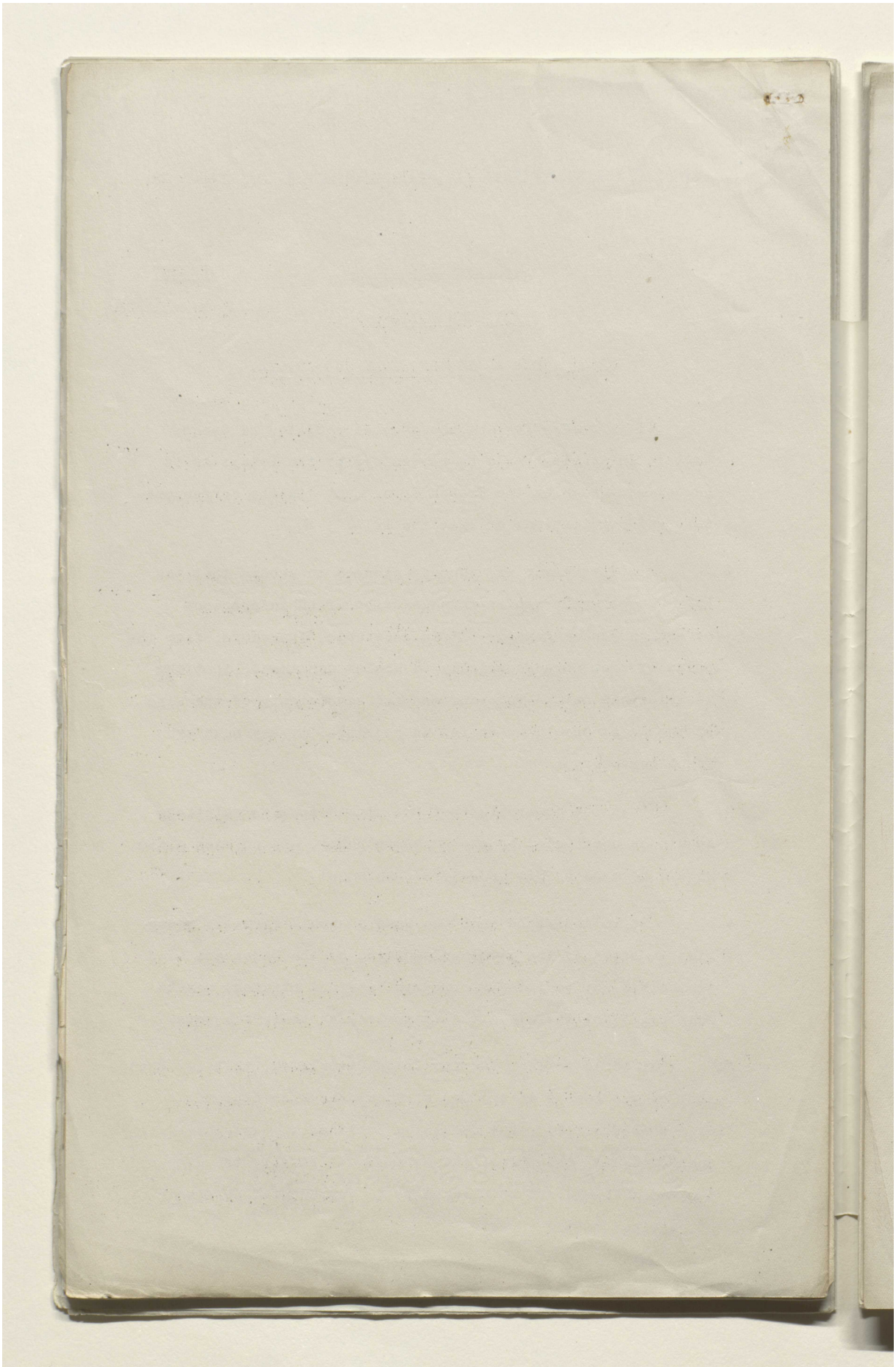

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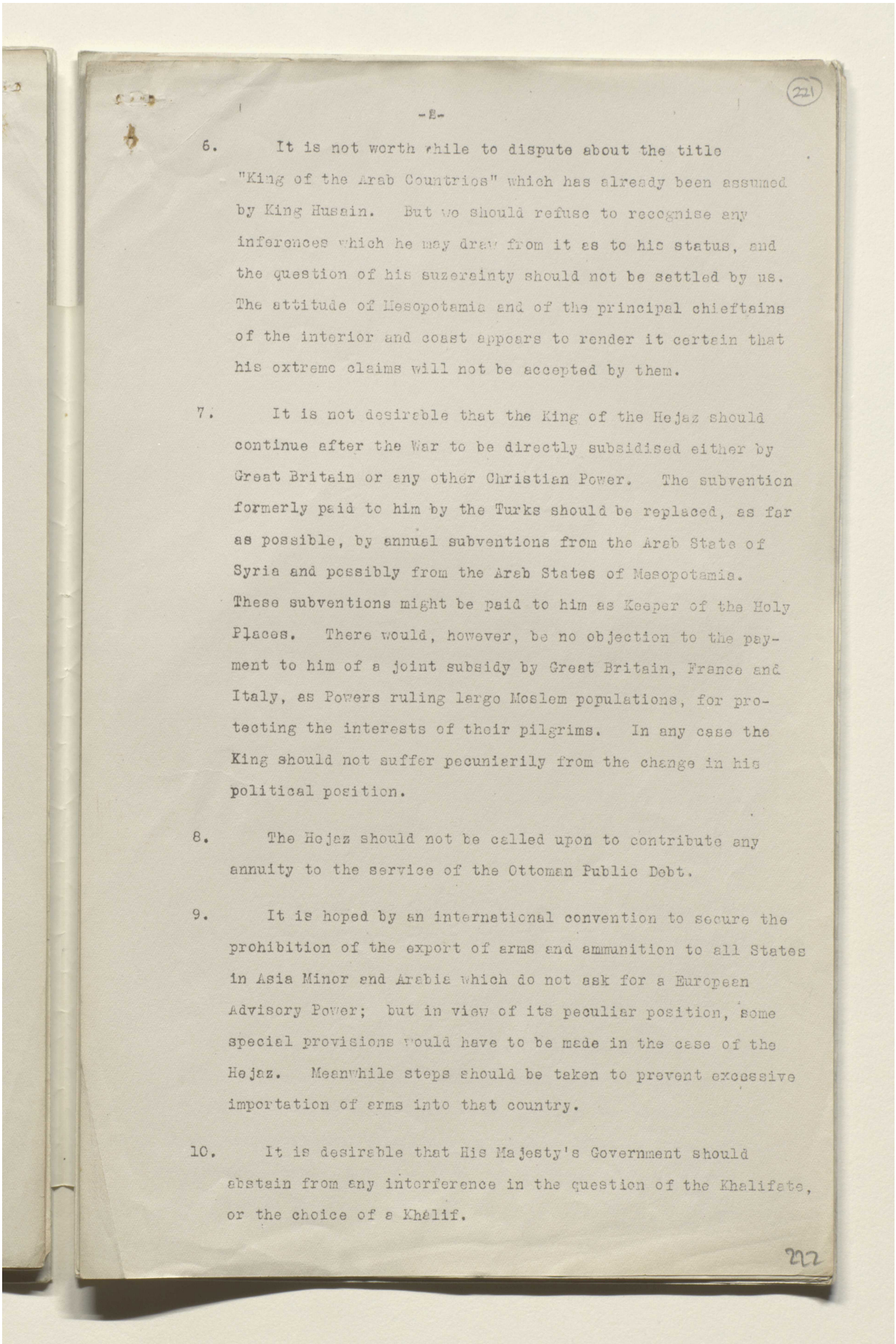

6. It is not worth while to dispute about the title "King of the Arab Countries" which has already been assumed by King Husain. But we should refuse to recognise any inferences which he may draw from it as to his status, and the question of his suzerainty should not be settled by us. The attitude of Mesopotamia and of the principal chieftains of the interior and coast appears to render it certain that his extreme claims will not be accepted by them.

7. It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the War to be directly subsidised either by Great Britain or any other Christian Power. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced, as far as possible, by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations, for protecting the interests of their pilgrims. In any case the King should not suffer pecuniarily from the change in his political position.

8. The Hejaz should not be called upon to contribute any annuity to the service of the Ottoman Public Debt.

9. It is hoped by an international convention to secure the prohibition of the export of arms and ammunition to all States in Asia Minor and Arabia which do not ask for a European Advisory Power; but in view of its peculiar position, some special provisions would have to be made in the case of the Hejaz. Meanwhile steps should be taken to prevent excessive importation of arms into that country.

10. It is desirable that His Majesty's Government should abstain from any interference in the question of the Khalifate, or the choice of a Khalif.

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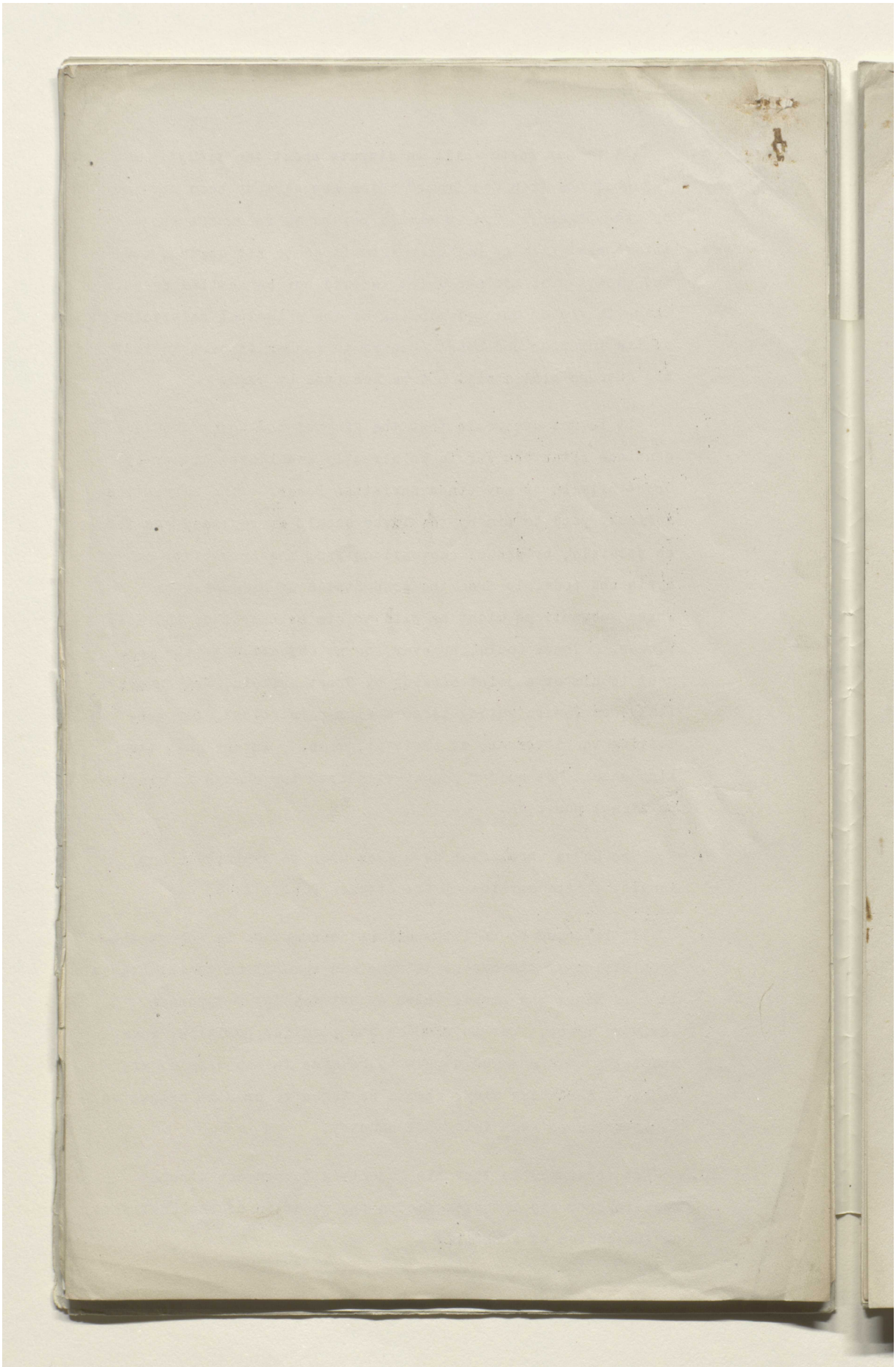

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WAR CABINET — SECRET

EASTERN COMMITTEE — (A.ii) E.C.2763-A.

RESOLUTIONS AS TO THE HEJAZ AND ARABIA.

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3. It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government.

4. It is desirable that the Powers should formally recognise in a treaty the peculiar position of the Hejaz and bind themselves not to interfere in its internal affairs, nor to seek political influence for themselves or their subjects.

5. It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agents kept by the Powers in the Hejaz, should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade. Equally the King of the Hejaz should not be allowed to be represented by Agents at Foreign Courts.

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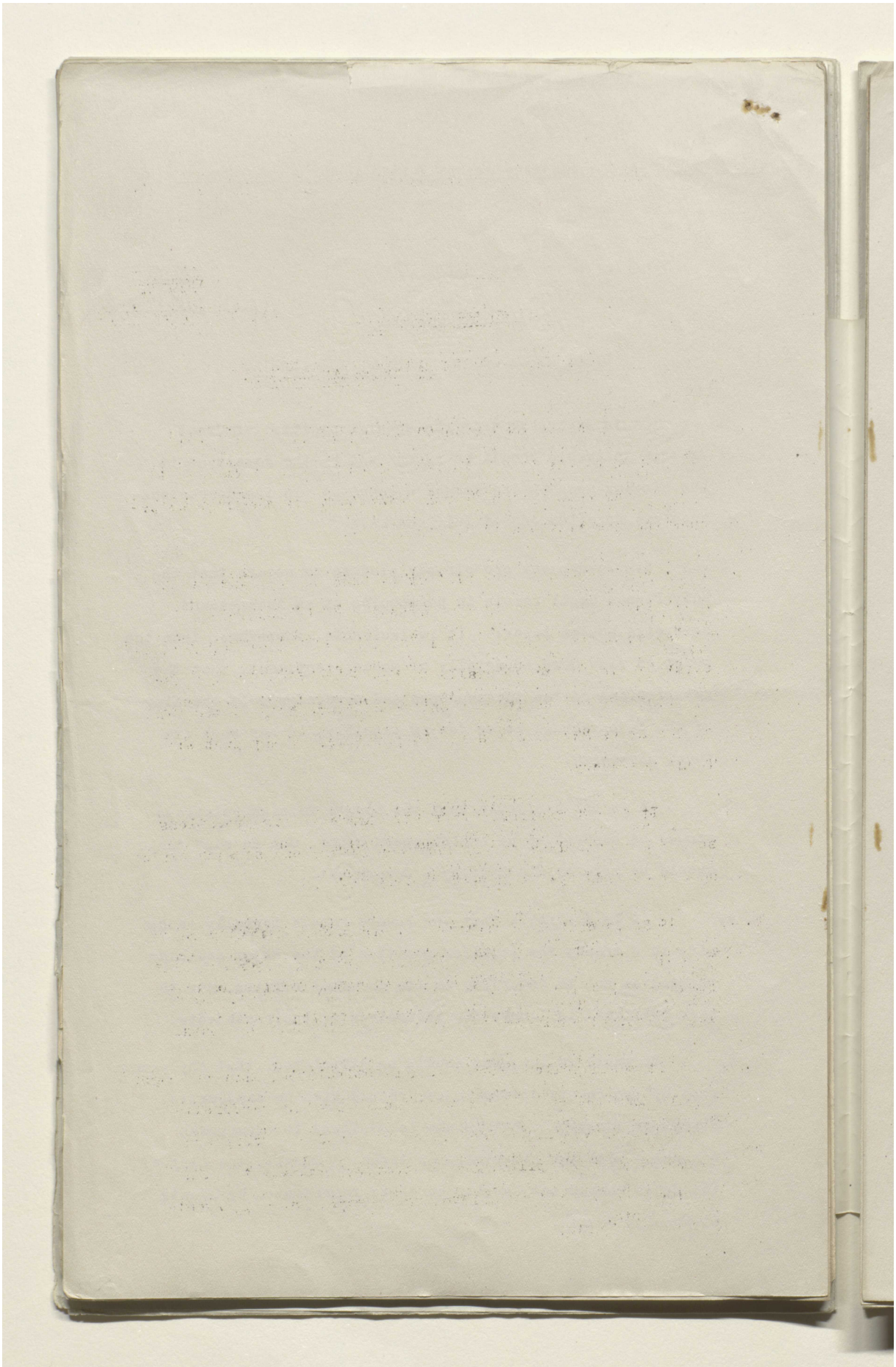

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6. It is not worth while to dispute about the title "King of the Arab Countries" which has already been assumed by King Husain. But we should refuse to recognise any inferences which he may draw from it as to his status, and the question of his suzerainty should not be settled by us. The attitude of Mesopotamia and of the principal chieftains of the interior and coast appears to render it certain that his extreme claims will not be accepted by them.

7. It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the War to be directly subsidised either by Great Britain or any other Christian Power. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced, as far as possible, by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations, for protecting the interests of their pilgrims. In any case the King should not suffer pecuniarily from the change in his political position.

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10. It is desirable that His Majesty's Government should abstain from any interference in the question of the Khalifate, or the choice of a Khalif.

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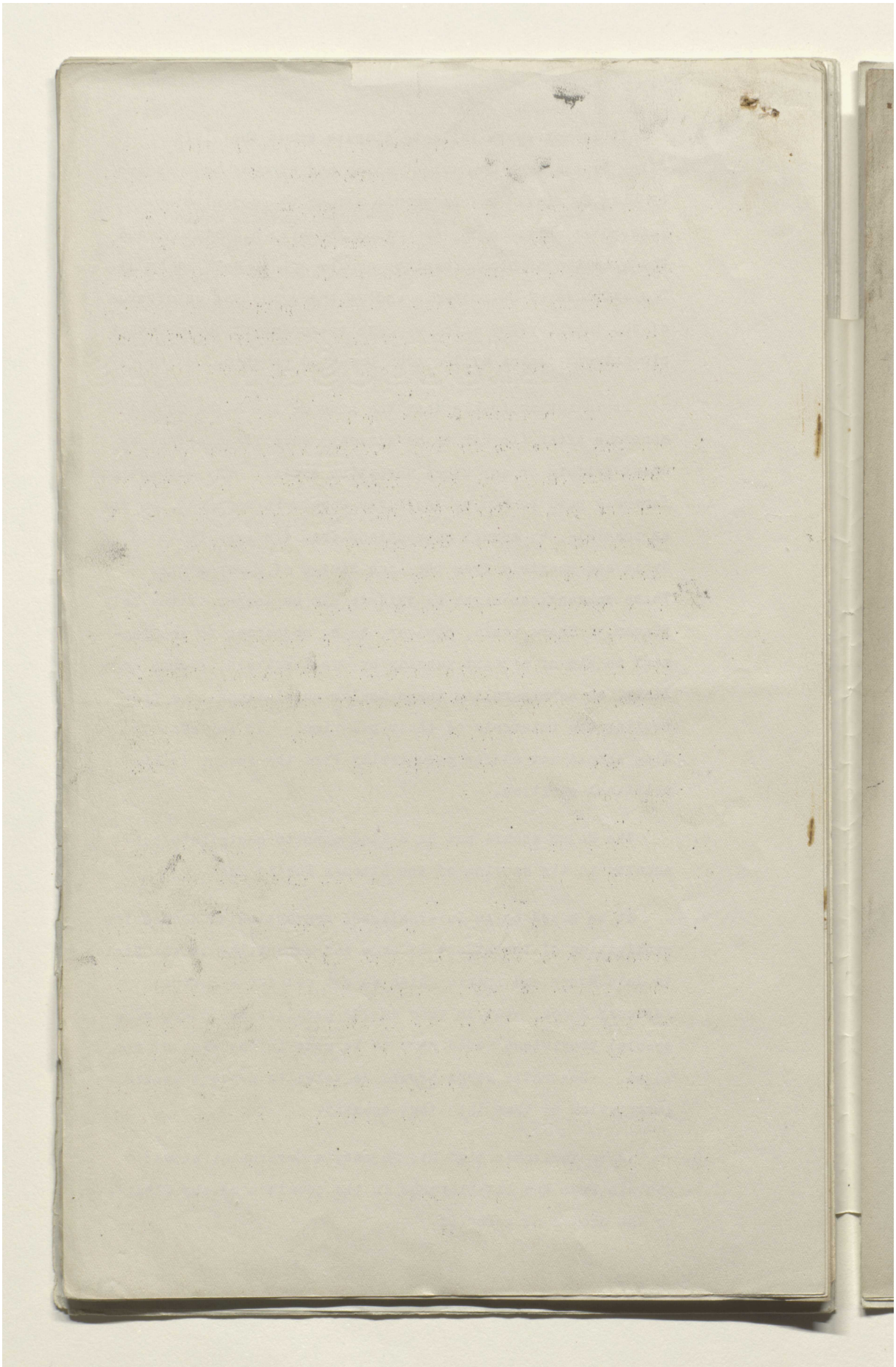

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C.iv. 31

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

SECRET.

E.C. 2771.

RESOLUTIONS ON MESOPOTAMIA, MOSUL, BAGHDAD & BASRA.

1. There can be no restoration of these territories to Turkish rule.

2. There should be no annexation of any of these territories by Great Britain.

3. It is the object of His Majesty's Government to set up an Arab government or governments of the liberated areas, and not to impose upon the populations any government which is not acceptable to them.

4. Whether there should be a single Arab State or a number of Arab States in these areas is a matter upon which educated native opinion in the areas affected is now being consulted.

5. All reports so far received appear to indicate a universal repugnance to the incorporation of these territories under a single Arab ruler, or to the recognition of the temporal sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz.

6. If it is found necessary to provide in any form for the authority over these areas of the King of the Hejaz, this should in all probability, be confined to a recognition of his spiritual position, and to the use of his name in the prayers in the Mosques. But the Committee recognise that this is a question for Moslem and not for Christian opinion to decide.

7. Whether a single Arab State or a number of Arab States be set up in these areas, the support and protection of a Great European Power will be found indispensable.

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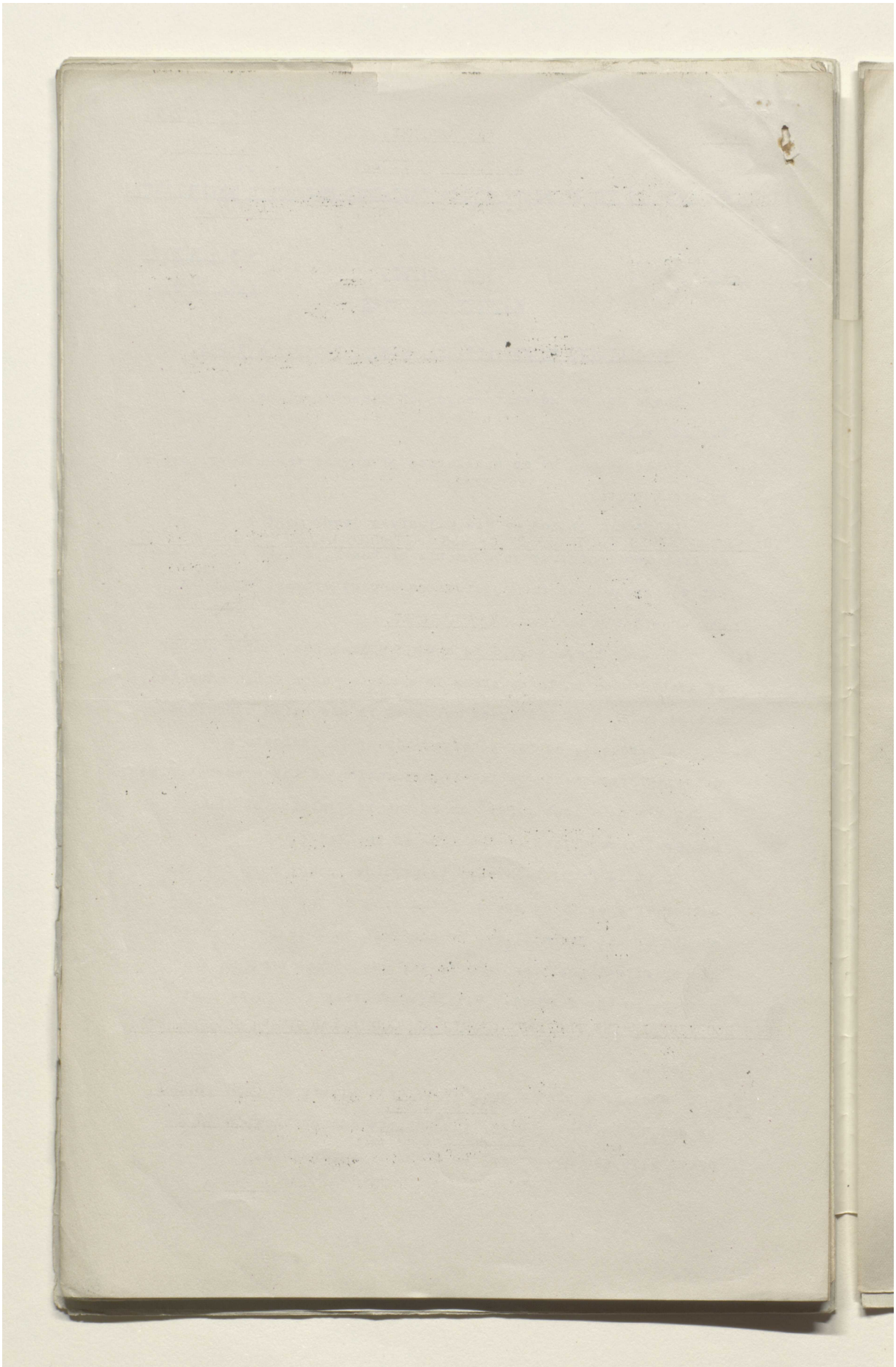

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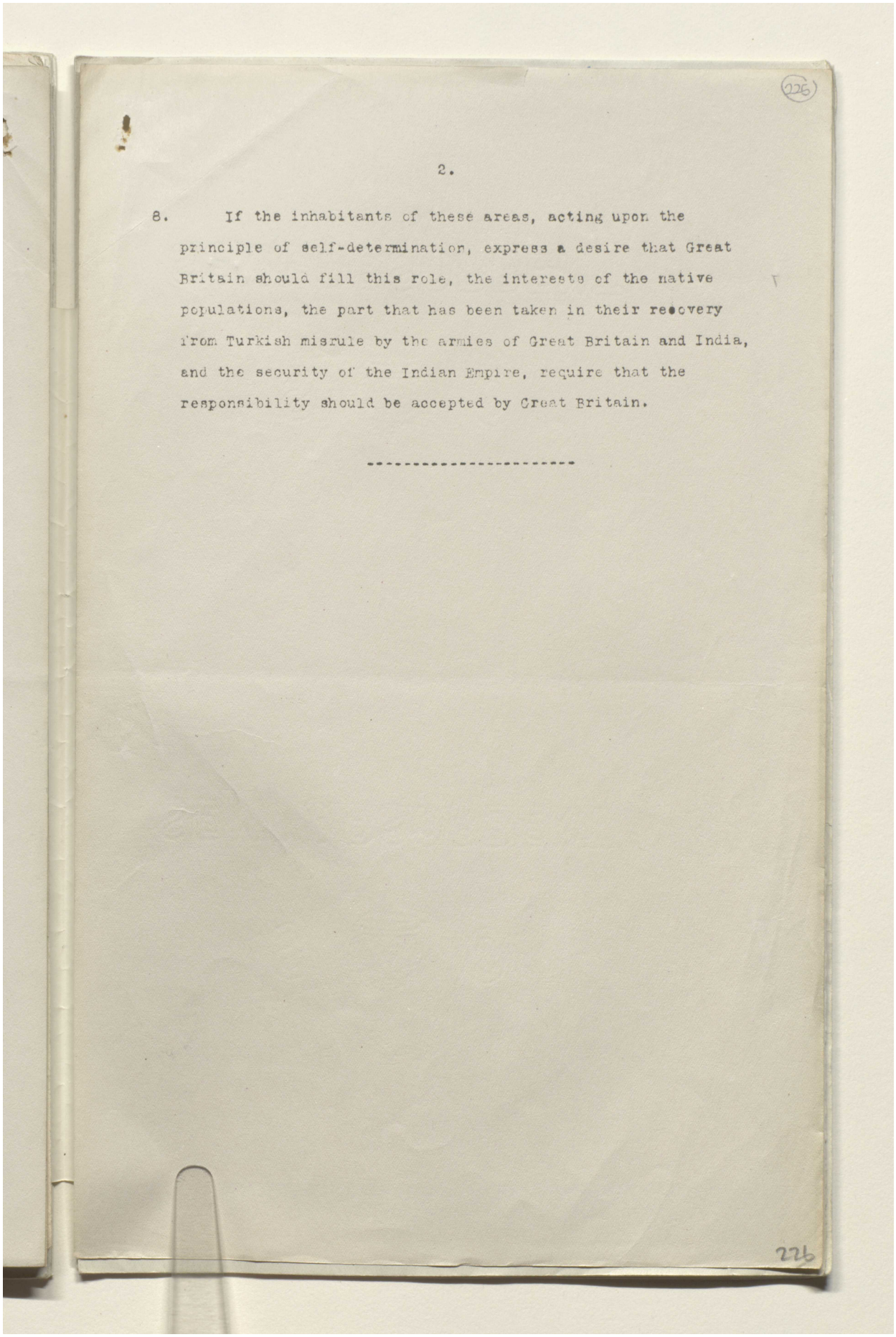

8. If the inhabitants of these areas, acting upon the principle of self-determination, express a desire that Great Britain should fill this role, the interests of the native populations, the part that has been taken in their recovery from Turkish misrule by the armies of Great Britain and India, and the security of the Indian Empire, require that the responsibility should be accepted by Great Britain.

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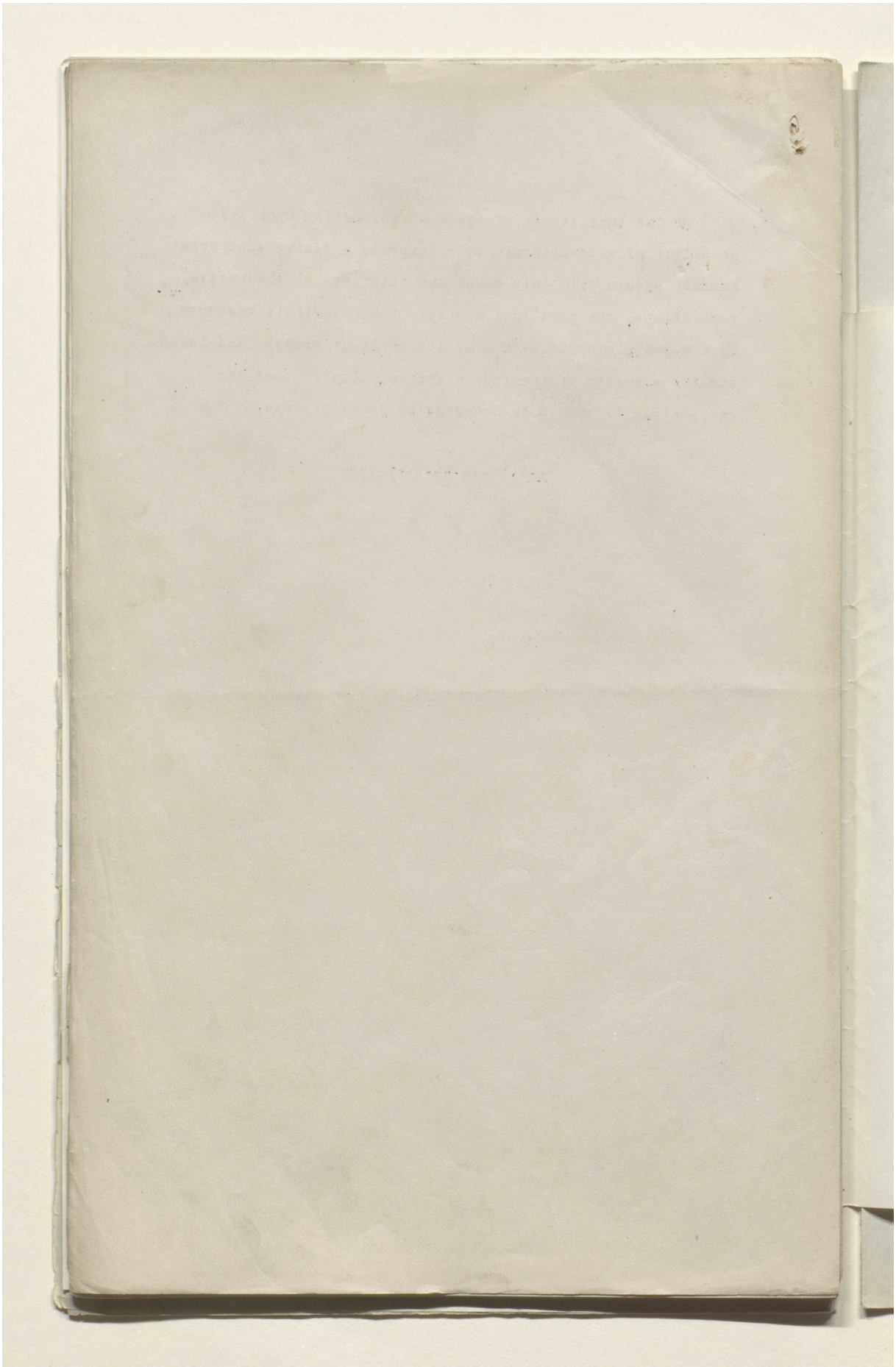

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 44th Minutes.

4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Wednesday, December 18, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

General SIR H. H. WILSON, K.C.B., D.S.O., Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The following also attended:

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR A. HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for India.

SIR A. H. GRANT, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury (for Minute 5).

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Middle Eastern Questions: President Wilson's Visit and the Imperial War Cabinet.

1. The Chairman said since the Committee last met it had been arranged that the President of the United States should visit England in the course of the following week. In view of this it had been decided at the War Cabinet that morning to hold a series of Imperial War Cabinet Meetings, in order to cover the ground and to arrive at decisions among ourselves in regard to certain important questions, *e.g.*, the League of Nations, disarmament, indemnities, the future of the German colonies, and the future of Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Constantinople. The question of Constantinople, which was Near East, did not come strictly within the Committee's purview. He had, therefore, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if the latter wished that the Committee should discuss Constantinople, and Mr. Balfour had replied that he would be glad if they would do so. He would, accordingly, invite the Committee, at a future Meeting, to examine

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various possible solutions of the future of that capital; they could, at least, explore the ground even if they could not arrive at any decisions. In the course of the last three or four meetings, the Committee had summed up their conclusions in regard to the Caucasus, Armenia, Syria, and Palestine, in a series of Resolutions. In view of the urgency of the occasion he had, since the Meeting of the Cabinet, drafted some conclusions in respect of Mesopotamia, that is to say the area from Mosul down to Basra, which he would now submit to the Committee as a basis of discussion.

Mesopotamia: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

2. The Committee discussed the Chairman's Draft Resolutions in regard to the future of Mesopotamia, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Certain amendments were suggested and accepted.

The Resolutions as finally adopted by the Committee were as follows :—

Resolutions on Mesopotamia, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

1. *There can be no restoration of these territories to Turkish rule.*

2. *There should be no annexation of any of these territories by Great Britain.*

3. *It is the object of His Majesty's Government to set up an Arab Government or Governments of the liberated areas, and not to impose upon the populations any Government which is not acceptable to them.*

4. *Whether there should be a single Arab State or a number of Arab States in these areas is a matter upon which educated native opinion in the areas affected is now being consulted.*

5. *All reports so far received appear to indicate a universal repugnance to the incorporation of these territories under a single Arab ruler, or to the recognition of the temporal sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz.*

6. *If it is found necessary to provide in any form for the authority over these areas of the King of the Hejaz, this should in all probability be confined to a recognition of his spiritual position, and to the use of his name in the prayers in the mosques. But the Committee recognise that this is a question for Moslem and not for Christian opinion to decide.*

7. *Whether a single Arab State or a number of Arab States be set up in these areas, the support and protection of a Great European Power will be found indispensable.*

8. *If the inhabitants of these areas, acting upon the principle of self-determination, express a desire that Great Britain should fill this rôle, the interests of the native populations, the part that has been taken in their recovery from Turkish misrule by the armies of Great Britain and India, and the security of the Indian Empire, require that the responsibility should be accepted by Great Britain.*

(A verbatim report of the discussion is given in the Annex to these Minutes.)

Hejaz and Arabia.

3. The Committee had before them Draft Resolutions as to the Hejaz and Arabia, prepared by the Foreign Office in consultation with the Chairman, in accordance with their decision at the Meeting on the 16th instant (E.C.–43rd Meeting, Minute 3 (a)).

The Committee decided :—

Resolution 1.—*To substitute the word "Powers" for the words "French and Italian Governments," and the words "Has already been by the French Government" for "was by the former."*

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Resolution 2.—*To add the words "if any such are found necessary," at the end of the Resolution.*

Resolution 3.—*To excise the passage "While it is . . ." to "Hejaz," and to substitute "any European" for "single."*

Resolution 4.—*To substitute the word "desirable" for "preferable," and to eliminate the words "or concessions or commercial advantages" . . . . "nor to support their subjects in seeking such."*

Resolution 5.—*To excise the last sentence, and to substitute the following: "equally the King of the Hejaz should not be allowed to be represented by agents at Foreign Courts."*

Resolution 6.—*In line 1, to substitute the words "Arab countries" for the word "Arabs," and at the end of the second sentence the words "not to be settled by us" for the words "be left to him to settle with the other Arab chiefs."*

Resolution 7 *should read as follows:—"It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the war to be directly subsidised either by Great Britain or any other Christian Power. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced, as far as possible, by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria, and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations, for protecting the interests of their pilgrims. In any case, the King should not suffer pecuniarily from the change in his political position."*

Resolution 8.—*To insert the word "Ottoman" before the words "Public Debt."*

Resolution 9.—*To eliminate the whole of the Resolution from the words "European Advisory Power" to the end, and to substitute after "Power," "but in view of its peculiar position some special provisions would have to be made in the case of the Hejaz, meanwhile steps should be taken to prevent the extensive importation of arms into that country."*

Resolution 10.—*To excise this Resolution.*

Resolution 11.—*To adopt this Resolution, which now becomes Resolution 10.*

The Resolutions as finally adopted by the Committee were as follows:—

Resolutions as to the Hejaz and Arabia.

1. *It is desirable that the special position of Great Britain in Arabia should be recognised by the Powers, as it has already been by the French Government in the correspondence and negotiations of 1916 and 1917.*

2. *His Majesty's Government are already pledged to secure that the Holy Places shall remain in possession of an independent sovereign Moslem Power. It is desirable, therefore, from the point of view more especially of Moslem sentiment, that the restrictions on the independence and sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz should be as few as possible, if any such are found necessary.*

3. *It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government.*

4. *It is desirable that the Powers should formally recognise in a treaty the peculiar position of the Hejaz and bind themselves not to interfere in its internal affairs, nor to seek political influence for themselves or their subjects.*

5. *It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agent kept by the Powers in the Hejaz should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the*

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pilgrimage or trade. Equally the King of the Hejaz should not be allowed to be represented by agents at foreign Courts.

6. It is not worth while to dispute about the title "King of the Arab Countries," which has already been assumed by King Husein. But we should refuse to recognise any inferences which he may draw from it as to his status, and the question of his suzerainty should not be setttled by us. The attitude of Mesopotamia and of the principal chieftains of the interior and the coast appears to render it certain that his extreme claims will not be accepted by them.

7. It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the war to be directly subsidised either by Great Britain or any other Christian Power. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced, as far as possible, by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations, for protecting the interests of their pilgrims. In any case, the King should not suffer pecuniarily from the change in his political position.

8. The Hejaz should not be called upon to contribute any annuity to the service of the Ottoman Public Debt.

9. It is hoped by an international convention to secure the prohibition of the export of arms and ammunition to all States in Asia Minor and Arabia which do not ask for a European Advisory Power; but, in view of its peculiar position, some special provisions would have to be made in the case of the Hejaz. Meanwhile, steps should be taken to prevent excessive importation of arms into that country.

10. It is desirable that His Majesty's Government should abstain from any interference in the question of the Khalifate or the choice of a Khalif.

(A verbatim report of the discussion appears in the Annex to these Minutes.)

Persian Kurdistan.

4. Mr. Montagu referred to a series of telegrams which had passed between his Department and the Political Officer, Baghdad (E.C. 2630, 2662, and 2665), relating to a request from the people of Persian Kurdistan that the British Government should extend their assistance and protection to them, and to attach them to Iraq, in return for which they would undertake to accept orders and advice from the British Government. Mr. Montagu said that he proposed to reply in the general sense that His Majesty's Government were pledged to preserve the integrity of Persia.

The Committee decided .—

To approve a telegram being sent in the above sense.

Trans-Caspia: The question of the withdrawal of General Malleson's Force.

5. With reference to the Meeting of the Committee on the 16th instant (E.C.–43rd Meeting, Minute 2), the Committee had before them Viceroy's telegram No. 16538, dated the 10th December, 1918 (E.C.–2693), giving the views of the Indian Government as to the importance, from the Indian point of view, of maintaining General Malleson's force in Trans-Caspia, and as to the tenability of his position if the Askabad Government collapses.

Mr. Montagu said that, according to General Malleson, unless we continued to give financial support to the Askabad Government it was bound to collapse. The position was that we could not continue this financial assistance. The Indian Government suggested that Malleson's troops should now be withdrawn across the border. He himself favoured this course, but suggested that they should remain until the Austro-German prisoners had been evacuated. If the

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Askabad Government fell they would be in a precarious position, and Malleson was already asking for guns, aeroplanes, &c. Malleson had been sent up during the war in order to bolster up the Askabad Government. Now that the war was over, we had no justification for being in Trans-Caspia, as the British Government had laid it down that we were not at war with the Bolsheviks.

The Chairman said that we all desired to extract Malleson from his intolerable position. His withdrawal, however, would mean the evacuation of Merv, Askabad, and, what was of special importance, of Krasnovodsk, which raised the question of our control of the Caspian. He understood that it was proposed that the force, if it was withdrawn, should retire to Birjand. He thought it would be difficult to explain so extensive a withdrawal. In any case, there must be no hasty movement. There was always the fear of a Bolshevik incursion into Khorassan, and, if we withdrew, the Turcomans might throw in their lot with the Bolsheviks. In any case, we were bound to maintain our Eastern cordon, with its apex Meshed, just as we had to maintain the cordon on the north-west.

Sir Hamilton Grant said that the proposal was that Malleson with a guard should withdraw to Meshed, and that his force, which consisted of some 1,400 men, should retire to Birjand. He informed the Committee that there were rumours of an Afghan movement towards Penjdeh.

General Thwaites was of opinion that we must retain Krasnovodsk, and maintain enough troops there to protect from an attack on the land side. So long as we controlled the Caspian we should be able to send up reinforcements.

General Cox said that the original intention of Malleson's force was to prevent an Austro-German infiltration eastwards. It was now supporting the Trans-Caspian Government against Bolshevik offensive from east and north. He thought it important that his force should remain in Trans-Caspia for the present. If he retired we should lose the railway east of Krasnovodsk, and the means it afforded us of sending up reinforcements and supplies. Also there would be nothing to prevent Bolshevik forces or influence from penetrating Khorassan. He suggested that we should temporise with the Askabad Government, if we could not continue financial support, and wait upon events.

The Committee decided :—

(a.) *To ask the Secretary of State for India to prepare a brief Memorandum stating in detail what the proposals of the Indian Government and his Department were in regard to the suggested withdrawal.*

(b.) *To resume the discussion as soon as members were in possession of the above Memorandum.*

(Initialled.) C. of K.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.,
December 18, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Wednesday, 18th December, 1918, at 3 p.m.

MESOPOTAMIA

LORD CURZON: We have already recorded our decisions about the Caucasus, Syria, and Palestine, in a number of Resolutions. We did not do so with regard to Mesopotamia. In view of the impending discussion of these subjects in the Imperial War Cabinet, prior to the visit of President Wilson, it seems desirable to rectify this omission. I have ventured, therefore, to draw up a number of draft resolutions embodying the conclusions as to Mesopotamia at which we arrived ten days ago, and I should like to interrupt our proceedings to-day, which were to begin with the Hejaz and Arabia, by reading them to the Committee, with a view of securing their assent, before submitting them to the Imperial War Cabinet on Friday.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Will you read them all through once, and then go through them one by one?

LORD CURZON: Yes. (1) There can be no restoration of these territories to Turkish rule. (2) There should be no annexation of any of these territories by Great Britain, nor the declaration of a British Protectorate over them. (3) It is the object of His Majesty's Government to set up an Arab Government or Governments in the liberated areas, and not to impose upon the populations any Government which is not acceptable to them. (4) Whether there should be a single Arab State or a confederation of Arab States in these areas is a matter upon which educated native opinion in the areas affected is now being consulted. (5) All reports so far received appear to indicate a universal repugnance to the inclusion of these territories in a single Arab State, or any recognition of the temporal sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz. (6) If it is found necessary to provide in any form for the overlordship over these areas of the King of the Hejaz, this should in all probability be confined to a recognition of his spiritual authority, and to the use of his name in the prayers in the mosques. (7) Whether a single Arab State or a number of Arab States be set up in these areas, the support and protection of a great European Power will be found indispensable. (8) If the inhabitants of these areas, acting upon the principle of self-determination, express a desire that Great Britain should fill this *rôle*, their recovery from Turkey by the armies of Great Britain and India, and the predominant interest of the security of the Indian Empire, require that the responsibility should be accepted by Great Britain. That is a rough, but I think a fairly accurate, summary of the conclusions at which we arrived, but, perhaps, we had better take them one by one.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not quarrel with any of them.

LORD CURZON: No. 1. There can be no restoration of these territories to Turkish rule.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is agreed.

LORD CURZON: No. 2. There should be no annexation of any of these territories by Great Britain, nor the declaration of a British Protectorate over them.

MR. BALFOUR: The only doubt I have about that is with regard to Basra. Although I am pretty clear that the views in 1914 and 1915 were in favour of the annexation of Basra, I gather that has been altered.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is a considerable body of opinion now that we could not treat Basra differently from the rest.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not contest that, but this is a modification of our own old view.

LORD CURZON: Yes, that is true, and at our meetings it transpired that whereas all of us, and not least Sir Percy Cox himself, in the early days were in favour of a policy of close administrative control amounting to annexation (or at any rate, almost so) in Basra, the various declarations we have made since, notably the Anglo-French self-determination declaration* in October 1918, rendered it impolitic to pursue that course. It also emerged from our discussions that an attempt to set up

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two forms of administrative control, one in the Baghdad vilayet and the other in the Basra vilayet, was really impossible, and that the treatment meted out to the one would inevitably have to be accorded to the other.

MR. MONTAGU: I have a small point to make about No. 2. It is not one of substance, but it is this: Supposing the enquiries now being made end in finding the people of all these districts do not want any overlordship, do not want any head, will not the word "Protectorate," which you use in the second conclusion, possibly preclude you from setting up the only form of government that would be practicable?

LORD CURZON: When I used the words "British Protectorate" here, I meant the formal declaration of a British Protectorate. I assume you would object to that as much as the rest of us.

MR. MONTAGU: Yes, but it may be almost inevitable. I do not want a difficulty afterwards because of the use of that word, if we are forced to something that is inevitable.

LORD CURZON: Are you speaking of all the areas from Mosul to the Gulf?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes, I do not think it is likely to occur, and I share your hope that it will not be necessary; but, supposing you have to put in an administrator, that is really declaring a British Protectorate.

LORD CURZON: I should put in a British administrator, but not declare a Protectorate.

MR. MONTAGU: It is a question of diplomatic language. Could you defend your case if you put in an administrator, and declared you were not going to have a Protectorate?

LORD CURZON: We shall have an administrator in any case behind the *façade* of Arab Government or Governments. There is to be a High Commissioner in Baghdad. The argument you apply to the head man at Basra would apply equally to Baghdad.

MR. BALFOUR: This raises one of the most difficult questions. We use the word "Protectorate" as if we understood it. There may be persons here more fortunate than myself, but frankly I do not understand it. It is one of the loosest words you can possibly conceive. Had we a Protectorate over Egypt before the war?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, certainly not.

MR. BALFOUR: What had we?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No one knows, but we had not a Protectorate.

MR. BALFOUR: Have we a Protectorate over anything?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Over Egypt now.

MR. BALFOUR: That is enough for me to go on with my questions. A Protectorate over Egypt amounts really, for all practical purposes, to absolute sovereignty.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No. It did before, but I do not think there is a very great deal of difference between the amount of our power in Egypt now and the amount of our power before the war.

MR. BALFOUR: I do not care which you choose. I will take either.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: A Protectorate is really a formal matter. You declare a Protectorate. It is what you say you have got, and you bring in any amount of influence. There is this difference, and I think Sir Erle Richards will bear me out, that thereupon the protected Power cannot have any relations with any other Power; it ceases to have any foreign policy.

MR. BALFOUR: This is where it is vital. I do not know in what spirit we are going to be met at the Conference by our colleagues of other nations, but supposing they put questions to us—the sort of questions I will suggest in a moment—how will they be answered? They will say, "You are for self-determination," and in obedience to self-determination you say, "Heaven forbid we should put any Government over these people that they do not want." These people say, "We want to be independent, but protected." You say, "Very well, we will protect you." Then my imaginary critic says, "What does a British Protectorate come to in practice?" It comes in the

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case of Egypt to absolute control; it comes in the case of the native States of India to something which I will not call absolute control, but which is in the last resort something very difficult to distinguish from absolute control. Therefore my imaginary critic will say, "We understand this British procedure; they call it a *façade*, but the substance is absolute British ownership for every known purpose of government: that is annexation; in loud and unmistakable terms they repudiate annexation; they proclaim their intimate and whole-hearted adhesion to self-determination, and all the rest of it, but when you come to see what they do, what they do is to establish a control which is benevolent, which is useful, which certainly has produced the most excellent results, but which is absolute control; that is not self-determination." I think we must make up our own minds how we should answer that kind of question. I could develop it, but I do not want to take up time.

LORD CURZON: That was not the case postulated by Mr. Montagu. He is looking at a position not in which we evade any declaration we have made, but in which the natives, exercising the power of self-determination which we concede, determine in favour of a Protectorate. They come to us and say, "We do not want the King of the Hejaz, we do not even want an Arab Amir; we do not want separate Arab States run by Arabs or by Arab Councils; what we want, at any rate for the time being, is the security resulting from a British Protectorate, because you are the only people to give it to us."

MR. BALFOUR: An undisguised British Raj. That is not the problem which is going to trouble you, but the one I put will.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think there is very much difficulty about it. I could answer it. Quite frankly I should say, "Well, as far as we are concerned, we would be glad to see these countries with a very large measure of independence; we would like to see them all have as much independence as Ibn Saud has got—practically everything, except that he must not admit a foreign country.

MR. BALFOUR: Something similar to Afghanistan.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is impracticable. We have done our best to find out how much independence they are ready for, and we have instructed our officers to find out how much independence they will accept. This is as far as they will go, and it amounts to this, that for the time being we shall have to control the administration. We shall encourage native officials as in Egypt; we shall have, if we can, a native ruler, a native titular ruler, as we have in Egypt, and possibly, as time goes on, we may get native Ministers, as we have in Egypt. If they get as far as Egypt it would be entirely a delusion to say that we control all branches of the administration, for it is not true. A very large amount of the actual administration is done by native officials with native ideas—and very badly done, too.

MR. BALFOUR: Ultimate control.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No doubt, but it would not be true to say it is part of the British Empire in the sense that Singapore is.

MR. BALFOUR: Singapore is a town.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, it is a district.

MR. MONTAGU: The state of affairs you have described as to what may happen is analogous to the state of affairs in Egypt at the moment, and that is a Protectorate.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I am sorry, but I cannot deal with two sets of questions at once. I was answering Mr. Balfour for the moment. It is quite simple. When we say we will not have a Protectorate, we mean exactly what we say, and that is a perfectly well defined expression in diplomatic language. It means that we will not declare a Protectorate over these districts, and it does not mean anything else.

MR. BALFOUR: "We will have a Protectorate, but will not declare it."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is because you use "Protectorate" in two senses.

MR. BALFOUR: I am afraid the Chairman thinks this is an *otiose* discussion.

LORD CURZON: No, I do not, but I was going to provide a way out of it. What Mr. Montagu is doubtful about is the use of the words "British Protectorate."

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He doubts it for different reasons from what you do. You doubt it because you think we shall be exposed to the charge of having disabled ourselves by a pledge from declaring a Protectorate, and yet of doing it in practice. Can we find a better word? Could we put it as follows: "There shall be no annexation of any of these territories by Great Britain, nor a direct assumption of British rule over them?"

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I would stick to your words as they were.

MR. MONTAGU: Would you not leave out "Protectorate" altogether? Do you want to raise the question of a Protectorate? Why not say simply "There shall be no annexation?"

MR. BALFOUR: I admit I am becoming tiresome. I am not on Mr. Montagu's point at all, but on my own point. The French want, under any name you like, absolute control of the districts that they are to get. They would like to have complete control of all the mineral resources, of all the concessions they want to be monopolists, and they really want to make Syria very much as Algeria or Tunis is. If they do that, then you get into trouble with the Italians at once. Are you going to allow them to have a sort of Protectorate? That is what troubles me.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: May I start from a different point of view, the point of view of self-determination; that is to say, what will the populations of these countries really desire in their own interests? Personally, I should not care a straw what the French did in Syria, except that the Arabs say they will go to war with them if they do these things.

MR. BALFOUR: That is most admirable and logical, and wholly consistent with clause 7. It fits in with all the theories, and with the fourteen points of President Wilson, but it does not fit in with the Powers we have to deal with—the French and the Italians. They are not in the least out for self-determination, they are out for getting whatever they can.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They are Imperialists.

MR. BALFOUR: Exactly. They are Imperialistic, and quite frankly so. In a speech I mentioned at the Cabinet to-day, they talk quite frankly of the necessity of Italy getting coal and iron concessions in Anatolia. The French may not be quite as frank, but that is exactly what they are thinking of. Then they will say: "By all your arrangements, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1915, and all the rest of it, equality is what we look to; and if you, the British, under the name of Protectorate, or any other name you choose, are going to have absolute ownership, or something which is broader, we mean to have it too." That is the real trouble. I am obliged to bother about it, because that is exactly the question which will come before my unhappy self when we are discussing these things at Paris.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think you are in any diplomatic difficulty, because of the terms of the Anglo-French declaration, which was drawn expressly for that purpose; the French drew it up in accordance with what was agreed on in the Foreign Office meeting. The object of it was to lay down the principle that it must be the populations who should settle the form of government they could have, and that we should not propose any form of government they did not approve.

MR. BALFOUR: The French will have a substantial objection to that, if it leads to quite different treatment, and the Italians will have not only a substantial, but a formal right to say so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The Italians are not entitled to the slightest sympathy of any sort or kind, nor have they any claim. But I agree the French have got a good contractual claim. The answer to the French is this: "My dear fellows, if you want to get the same results from your native populations you must concede the same opportunities as the English."

MR. BALFOUR: "Look at us!"

LORD ROBERT CECIL: "It is your business to make them like you; if you fail, we cannot help that."

MR. BALFOUR: "This is the way we think you should conduct it."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should certainly say that.

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LORD CURZON : Lord Robert Cecil is right in essence. He says both of us have put our signatures to a document which lays down a principle of self-determination. If the self-determining people in one part of the Eastern world claim to be protected by us, we are acting in accordance with that principle. None of these nations in any circumstances would ever consent to be protected by the French. I do not think, however, that the words are of great importance, and I am prepared to leave them out.

(*Resolutions* 3, 4, *and* 5 *were then accepted.*)

LORD CURZON : No. 6, "If it is found necessary to provide in any form for the overlordship over these areas of the King of the Hejaz, this should in all probability be confined to a recognition of his spiritual authority and to the use of his name in the prayers in the mosques."

MR. MONTAGU : He has not any spiritual authority yet, has he?

LORD CURZON : As Sherif of Mecca, he has a spiritual position.

MR. MONTAGU : But no spiritual authority over Mesopotamia?

MR. BALFOUR : Not over the Shiahs.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : "Recognition of his spiritual *position*," I think, would be a safer word than "authority."

MR. BALFOUR : Do the Shiahs take any account of the man who owns Mecca?

LORD CURZON : I daresay others are better qualified to answer, but I should say next to no account.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT : I think, in accordance with the principle that we should hold ourselves entirely aloof from everything to do with the Khalifate, it would be wise to hold ourselves aloof from any recognition of any spiritual authority of any kind whatever in the Moslem world. The Sherif may claim a certain spiritual authority even over the Shiahs of Mesopotamia, and for us in any way to recognise it, I think, would be both distasteful to the Moslem world as a whole, and might involve us in difficulties such as we have sought to avoid in dissociating ourselves from the Khalifate.

LORD CURZON : You will remember, in regard to this particular suggestion about the use of his name in the prayers in the mosques, that the title of Amir-ul-Muminir has appeared in almost all the recommendations which have reached us. It was suggested to us not only by Colonel Lawrence here, but also in Commander Hogarth's paper, and in Miss Bell's paper. Therefore, it has found support even in the areas to which you refer.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT : Feisal would like it, and so would the Sherif. All I say is that we, as a Christian Power, would be wise to dissociate ourselves from any such recognition.

LORD CURZON : I have merely put it in a hypothetical form, "If it is found necessary to provide in any form for the overlordship over these areas of the King of the Hejaz, this should in all probability be confined to a recognition of his spiritual position and to the use of his name in the prayers in the mosques."

MR. BALFOUR : Sir Hamilton Grant's view would be completely met if a rider were put to that : "The Committee recognise that this is a matter entirely for Moslem and not for Christian nations to decide."

LORD CURZON : Very well. For whom do they pray in the mosques at Baghdad now?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT : The Sultan still, I think.

LORD CURZON : "(7) Whether a single Arab State or a number of Arab States be set up in these areas, the support and protection of a great European Power will be found indispensable." Is that accepted?

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I think that is clear.

LORD CURZON : "(8) If the inhabitants of these areas, acting upon the principle of self-determination, express a desire that Great Britian should fill this *rôle*, their recovery from Turkey by the armies of Great Britain and India and the predominant

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interest of the security of the Indian Empire require that the responsibility should be accepted by Great Britain."

MR. MONTAGU: I do not like that very much, if I may say so with great respect. The real reason why I want England to accept that responsibility is because I believe we are the only Power that could do it for the good of the inhabitants of the country. You base yourself upon the fact that we have conquered it.

LORD CURZON: I state two reasons, and you have stated a third.

MR. MONTAGU: Would not the Imperial War Cabinet or our negotiators at Paris put the last reason, the good of the inhabitants, before the other two?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree. I should rather like to say that if they desire it we think they ought to have it, and that we believe it will be for the best interests of the inhabitants. In saying this, we do not ignore the fact that there are reasons which would make it of advantage to us.

LORD CURZON: There are three main reasons why we are going to do it, apart from pledges we have given. One is the interests of the people, which Mr. Montagu puts in the forefront; secondly, the fact that our armies have conquered these areas; and, thirdly, we cannot allow anything to menace the security of the Indian Empire.

MR. BALFOUR: The last you should carefully avoid, I think.

LORD CURZON: I put it in vague terms: "The predominant interest of the security of the Indian Empire." Surely it is obvious that one of the reasons why we entered into this part of the war was to cut in twain the German ambitions to get to the Persian Gulf. There is no concealment about it. The Baghdad Railway was a weapon directed at the heart of India. We have destroyed it, and we do not mean to let it start again. These are the facts, are they not?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think the War Cabinet would rather like it, but from the point of view of negotiating I do not know what Mr. Balfour thinks. I should have thought the less we said about these aspects the better.

MR. BALFOUR: In conversations with our enemies at the gate I would not mention it all.

THE HEJAZ AND ARABIA.

LORD CURZON: We can put in all three reasons. Our last meeting was devoted to a discussion of the question of the Hejaz and Arabia, and at the end of the meeting the Foreign Office and myself were commissioned together to draw up a number of resolutions* recording the results at which we had arrived. Perhaps the Committee will allow me to read them. "(1) It is desirable that the special position of Great Britain in Arabia should be recognised by the French and Italian Governments, as it was by the former in the correspondence and negotiations of 1916 and 1917." The negotiations of 1917 took the form of what was known as a *projet d'arrangement*, but it never got further, and, therefore, we cannot quote that as involving anything more than the views entertained by the French Government at that time. But when I allude to the correspondence of 1916, I am alluding to a definite statement that appeared in letters communicated by M. Cambon to the Government there, in which the French of their own accord, and unsolicited, did offer a recognition of the special political position of ourselves in Arabia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, and in 1917 too.

LORD CURZON: That is so; I do not say that it is vital to get this admission. If there was great trouble about getting it, it might not be necessary to press for it; but it is desirable to get it if we can, not so much with a view to the settlement of the Hejaz question now, as to prevent troubles arising in the future. If we can get this general recognition from France and Italy, it will give us a cleaner slate upon which to write the characters we choose in the future.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The only thing is, I do not think I should be inclined to raise the matter again with the French. I should say, "We have got your statements of 1916 and 1917, and they are good enough." You might ask the Italians, but if you do, the Italians will ask for something in return, and you will have a tiresome negotiation. They will not grant it as a favour, but will regard it as something that has to be paid for in some other negotiation.

* E.C.-2763.

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MR. BALFOUR : I do not want to extend the discussion more than I can help, but this matter really touches one of our greatest British interests, and one which I do not see how to protect in these negotiations. Personally, I believe that we should gain, on the whole, if we did not acquire some of the colonies and areas which very likely we shall acquire in this war, and if, in exchange, we could really secure, not as a matter of contract merely, but as a matter of practice as well as contract, that Italy and France never intrigue against us in any of these semi-civilised countries. All the troubles of the Foreign Office, since I have been a member of it, have been brought about by matters raised by officials looking after the twopenny-halfpenny and very often corrupt interests of France or Italy, or serving small, narrow, nationalistic objects. They have raised endless friction with the Foreign Office, and if we could really leave the French and Italians in their own areas, without ever interfering with them, and bring about reciprocity, I believe the greatest British interests would be satisfied. I would much rather have that than some of the colonies we possess or are likely to get. I am strongly in favour of that, and I should like to extend it as far as I could, and I should like to make it, if I could, a matter of bargaining at the Conference. I do not know how to do it, but perhaps somebody else is dexterous enough to think of something we could give, as it were, to the French and the Italians, not bargaining over the Hejaz here, or over this area there, or that area, but a universal bargain covering the whole of these districts. Something like we did in the original *Entente* arrangement of 1904 would be a perfect godsend, I think, to the holder of my office and to all his successors, and would really have an important effect.

LORD CURZON : It is difficult for us to find geographical areas to which you can apply that kind of formula, and it is difficult for them.

MR. BALFOUR : They do not want to do it. You say they will want something in exchange. That is the trouble. We really want to do it. We do not want to make a bother about it, but they do not want to do it at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : The point here is that we have got a definite recognition by the French as far as this area is concerned.

MR. BALFOUR : That is so, but it does not come to anything.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I agree. We have this definite recognition by the French, and I do not see that we should gain anything by asking for that recognition to be repeated.

MR. BALFOUR : I think it is as well to assume a thing if you have got it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Therefore, this first paragraph really amounts to this, that we should ask for a recognition by the Italians. I confess I have some doubts as to whether it is worth while to ask for recognition by the Italians here.

MR. BALFOUR : I do not think it is as regards this, but it is important if it is coupled with everything else.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : You must consider what the Italians are like. If you have a recognition by the Italian Government that they have no interest in Arabia, that would not prevent an Italian official trying to get in if he could.

MR. BALFOUR : They are not so bad as the French. The French are trying to start a bank there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : They will try perpetually. Brémond and another carried on a most elaborate intrigue the whole time.

LORD CURZON : Would you prefer this—it assumes, of course, a new agreement—"It is desirable to adhere to the recognition of the special position of Great Britain in Arabia given by the French Government in the correspondence and negotiations of 1916 and 1917."

LORD ROBERT CECIL : Certainly. I have no objection to that.

LORD CURZON : If Mr. Balfour finds it possible to bring in Italy at any stage, so much the better. That would be free from the objection raised by Lord Robert Cecil.

MR. BALFOUR : Is it not open to the more serious objection that it excludes the French and includes the Italians ?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL : You would not deal with the Italians at all. You would merely state in this document that we have got this recognition by the French, and we must adhere to it.

MR. BALFOUR : But this is a document advising the Cabinet as to policy, and if you leave it like that every member of the Cabinet will say, " You have got this with the French and that satisfies you, but it does not satisfy us ; we must get it out of the Italians."

LORD ROBERT CECIL : We want it out of the Italians, and it might turn out to be easy. The negotiations might suddenly take a turn when you could say, " Then you do recognise you have no right there," and they would say, " Yes."

MR. BALFOUR : I should put it like this : " It is desirable, though perhaps not possible, that the special position of Great Britain in Arabia should be recognised by the Italian Government as it has already been recognised by the French."

LORD ROBERT CECIL : That kind of thing would do very well.

LORD CURZON : This is the only place in which the Italian Government is mentioned. Elsewhere we talk about " the Powers." Would you prefer not to specify them here ?

MR. BALFOUR : That would be a good plan.

LORD CURZON : " It is desirable that the special position of Great Britain in Arabia should be recognised by the Powers, as it has already been by the French Government in the correspondence and negotiations of 1916 and 1917."

MR. BALFOUR : I like that better still.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I do not object to that.

LORD CURZON : " (2) His Majesty's Government are already pledged to secure that the Holy Places shall remain in possession of an independent sovereign Moslem Power. It is desirable, therefore, from the point of view more especially of Moslem sentiment, that the restrictions on the independence and sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz should be as few as possible."

MR. BALFOUR : Are there any restrictions on his independence and sovereignty which you contemplate ?

LORD CURZON : Yes. We go on presently to define what we mean. It would be a restriction to say he must have a British Resident.

MR. BALFOUR : Do we say that later on ?

LORD CURZON : Later on we say he shall not. This is merely a general statement. That formula was drawn up in the Foreign Office, I think, as a general preliminary.

MR. BALFOUR : I think it is right, except that I suppose it is followed by an enumeration of the restrictions we do mean to provide ?

LORD CURZON : Yes, if you call the appointment of Consular Agents a restriction on sovereignty. I do not suppose it is.

MR. BALFOUR : What had you in mind ?

SIR LOUIS MALLET : I thought we ought to refer to his complete independence and sovereignty.

MR. SHUCKBURGH : There is a restriction in No. 5.

SIR LOUIS MALLET : Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : I think it is right as it stands.

MR. BALFOUR : You have read all the documents and I have not.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : We could not allow him to make a special arrangement with everybody.

MR. BALFOUR : No.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: A completely independent Power would obviously be entitled to.

MR. BALFOUR: Restrictions on the sovereignty of the King of the Hejaz in so far as foreign affairs are concerned; those are the only restrictions, I suppose?

LORD CURZON: Shall we come back to this presently?

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "(3) While it is desirable to exclude foreign intrigue from the Hejaz, it is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by a single Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. Of course, it is desirable to exclude foreign intrigue everywhere, but how would that practically work out?

LORD CURZON: They are Foreign Office words, and I am not responsible for them.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should have thought it would have been better to leave out the first phrase and simply say, "It is not desirable," and so on.

LORD CURZON: Yes. I do not think it is necessary.

MR. BALFOUR: When you say, "It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by a single Power," it almost implies that you think it would be a good thing that they should be controlled by a lot of Powers, which is the very last thing we should want.

LORD CURZON: It is a general way of stating that we do not intend to put forward a claim ourselves to have control of his foreign relations.

MR. BALFOUR: What you really want to say is that His Majesty's Government put forward no claim to control the foreign policy of the King of the Hejaz, and that no other Power or Powers ought to be allowed to do so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That comes later.

MR. BALFOUR: Then what is this all about?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I really agree, it would be enough to make it run, "No claim should be made that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by His Majesty's Government."

LORD CURZON: We could meet Mr. Balfour's point by saying, "It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is better.

LORD CURZON: "And no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government."

MR. BALFOUR: That is the important thing. In fact, I think that is what I said.

LORD CURZON: Then we cut out the preamble about "It is desirable."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government." "(4) It is preferable that the Powers should formerly recognise in a treaty the peculiar position of the Hejaz and bind themselves not to interfere in its internal affairs, nor to seek political influence or concessions or commercial advantages for themselves or their subjects, nor to support their subjects in seeking such." Is the word "preferable" or "desirable"? I see "preferable" here. Why do we say "preferable"?—preferable to what?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think "desirable" was what was meant. But does it not go a little far, as you have stated it? Supposing the King, as suggested in the Foreign Office Memorandum, should say, "I should like Jeddah to have electric light," are we to discourage any of our subjects from seeking the concession?

LORD CURZON: I am not responsible for this clause.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: What the Foreign Office said was they were not to do it without communicating with one another.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: That was the object we had in view, but in the Memorandum we said it was not necessary, and it would be better to leave it perfectly free. Otherwise we should have to tell the French, and the French would want to get a concession too. He will probably turn to us if he wants a thing.

MR. BALFOUR: How is he to light Mecca? He must do it through a manufacturing country, either England, France, or America, in that case.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: He ought to be free to do so.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

MR. MONTAGU: Lord Robert says we bind ourselves to discourage it, but this clause does not do that; it is negative.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It says we are not to support them. Supposing a company came to the Foreign Office or the Department of Overseas Trade and said, "We have a big opportunity, and it will help us greatly if you would convey to the King of the Hejaz that we are really respectable people."

LORD CURZON: I think we ought to cut out the last eight words, "nor to support their subjects in seeking such." If the King of the Hejaz wants electric light or gas, and if among the people who apply for the concession is a British subject, it is rather hard to say that if the British subject goes to our representative he is not to be at liberty to support him.

MR. MONTAGU: That is all right so far as the British Foreign Office is concerned.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You must cut out "commercial advantages" as well.

LORD CURZON: We do not seek them. All I thought that meant was that we do not take the initiative, but that if the initiative comes from him we should not stand in the way.

MR. BALFOUR: The objection to that is that it must be quite inefficacious. Supposing a Frenchman casually remarks to the Sultan, "An excellent firm, so-and-so are," is that "seeking," or is it not? Of course it is. You cannot prevent him seeking. The worst of it is—and I think this is really the most important matter with regard to these half-civilised States—I believe all our troubles are coming from concessions, and if anybody could suggest a method of dealing with them properly I think they would perform a great service. I do not think this clause is quite successful as it stands.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, but the real thing is it ought all to be done fairly and freely. You cannot say, and it would be a perfectly ridiculous thing to say, to a half-civilised State, "No European is to get a concession there." That would mean that they would revert to the condition of civilisation in which they are now.

MR. BALFOUR: This prevents the French representative at Mecca putting on his uniform and going to the King and saying, "I recommend you to take such-and-such a company for carrying out such-and-such a purpose." It stops there, but it does not stop the real methods of persuasion which are different from that.

LORD CURZON: I do not think the French representative any more than ours will be at Mecca. When the war is over, the French will press upon the King banks and other institutions at Jeddah and elsewhere. They would get ahead of us in that respect, as they tried to do in the early days. Ought we not to stop that?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: In point of fact, what happened was that immediately the Arabs came to us and said, "What do you think about this," and we said, "It is a stupid thing, you had better not do it," they did not.

MR. MONTAGU: But supposing he has influence there?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That would be all right, I think. I should say, "nor to seek political influence for themselves or their subjects," leaving out "or concessions or commercial advantages."

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MR. BALFOUR: I do not object to No. 4, because I think it shows a sort of ideal, but I do not think it will work. It seems to me to be rather an advantage.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I object to it really in substance. I say it is perfectly impossible for you to do it. I should like to prevent any other Power doing it, but it is evident we could not do it, I think.

MR. BALFOUR: Do you not think we could avoid seeking concessions?

LORD CURZON: It is what we do in Afghanistan. We deliberately dissociate ourselves. Sir Hamilton Grant will correct me if I am wrong, but, as far as I remember, anything in the way of setting up a factory or ammunition works, or anything of that sort, is always done by the Amir on his own initiative. Of course, he is not encouraged by us.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: That is so, and latterly he has been inviting American firms and we have never objected. We have given him an absolutely free hand to employ and call in any firm he likes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Supposing a British firm comes to you and says, "We should like to have this thing, cannot you say a word for us?" Would you say "No" to that?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes; we have never done it. We leave it entirely to him. When they go up we give them a letter saying that they go at their own risk, and that if they die an awful death when they get there we will not go to war about it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is not much in the way of support.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: No.

LORD CURZON: There is some advantage in this clause. I think myself it is a good thing.

MR. BALFOUR: I rather like advertising what we wish to happen, even if it does not happen.

LORD CURZON: After all, we only say "It is desirable." I think we should cut out, "nor to support their subjects in seeking such."

MR BALFOUR: That is the Afghanistan policy.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think it is a rather different case from Afghanistan, because we do not allow anybody else to do it.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Jeddah has been an open port for years.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You will have all your commercial people saying, "The effect is that we alone are to be deprived of the assistance of our Government."

MR. BALFOUR: In other words, we shall keep the treaty and they will not.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. There are many advantages from a commercial point of view.

LORD CURZON: What are the views of the Indian Government?

MR. MONTAGU: I do not mind at all, so far as I am concerned. I am rather inclined to think it would be difficult to work it. My difficulty is entirely that we would work it well and honestly, and that the French will work it dishonestly. When I use that expression I do not mean other than that the French will seek, by means of supporting their subjects, to penetrate politically.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: See what happens. In these cases the man after the concession goes to the French Government and says: "You know the English are straining every nerve to get these things; you really must help us." The French Government, being more at the mercy of their commercial people than we are, hasten to do it. I do not believe that they are wickeder than we are.

MR. BALFOUR: Oh yes, they are.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Perhaps they may be, that is really the way it works.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

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LORD CURZON: As there seems to be a good deal of doubt about it, perhaps we should leave out the reference to commercial concessions, and leave it as follows: "Nor to seek political influence for themselves or their subjects."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think myself that that is as far as we can go.

LORD CURZON: Does Mr. Balfour agree?

MR. BALFOUR: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "(5) It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agents kept by the Powers in the Hejaz, should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade. Great Britain should rely on her general predominance in Arabia and her existing relations with King Hussein to maintain her influence."

MR. BALFOUR: If I may say so, it is rather odd that, "it would follow." No. 5 begins "It would follow," and then says, "but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We could take all that out.

MR. BALFOUR: You should have consistency.

LORD CURZON: The inconsistency arose because I put in the words "or trade." In the Foreign Office draft it was confined to the pilgrimage. The inconsistency there was mine and not theirs. I think we need not put in the last sentence about Great Britain relying upon her general predominance in Arabia and her existing relations with King Hussein to maintain her influence.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is rather like saying it is all humbug.

LORD CURZON: It was not intended in that sense. "(6) It is not worth while to dispute about the title 'King of the Arabs' which has already been assumed by King Hussein, but we should refuse to recognise any inferences which he may draw from it as to his status, and the question of his suzerainty should be left to him to settle with the other Arab chiefs. The attitude of Mesopotamia, and of the principal chieftains of the interior and coast, appears to render it certain that his extreme claims will not be accepted by them." That really is a proposal to drop the controversy in which we were involved earlier in the day, as to finding a title harmless to us and acceptable to him. When Colonel Lawrence came here, he told us that the particular title which the King did assume, and which was used at his coronation, was not actually "King of the Arabs," to which we had objected, but "King of the Arab countries." There is a certain distinction between the two, but it really does not matter much to us what countries the King chooses to regard as Arab, or that he should call himself King over them. On the other hand, if we call him "King of the Arabs," it seems to give him sovereignty over all the Arabs in all parts of the East.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Ought we not to put it in, then?

LORD CURZON: Do you know what the word is, Sir Hamilton Grant? I am not an Arabic scholar.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I am afraid I do not.

LORD CURZON: I know Colonel Lawrence told us it was "The King of the Arab countries." I propose that we do nothing whatever about it. If he chooses to use that title, let him do so.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We write to him as "The King of the Hejaz," and the Post Office alters it to "The King of the Arabs."

LORD CURZON: There is another question: we have always called him "His Lordship." I think the word is "Siyador." We have been driven by the example of the French to call his son "Royal Highness."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And to refer to the King as "His Majesty."

LORD CURZON: He does become "His Majesty."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is part of what the French did.

LORD CURZON: Does our Government call him "His Majesty"?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Then it is not necessary to refer to it here.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The only phrase I did not like was this: "The question of his suzerainty should be left to him to settle with the other Arab chiefs," but I do not mind that very much.

LORD CURZON: "The question of his suzerainty should not be touched by us"—you might put in something like that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: "And the question of his suzerainty should not be settled by us;" is that right?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: No. 7 touches the question of subsidy which I raised at the last meeting: "It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the war to be subsidised either by Great Britain or any Christian nation. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria, and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment of a small joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy for the sole purpose of keeping free the caravan routes."

MR. BALFOUR: It would be a serious thing if he lost money by the change of status. It would be regrettable.

LORD CURZON: The subvention we are giving him now is greater than anything he had from the Turks.

MR. BALFOUR: That is true. I do not think he ought to get less under the new arrangement than under the Turks.

LORD CURZON: Certainly not.

MR. BALFOUR: Is there any security that he will not? I should think he would get less under this arrangement.

LORD CURZON: I do not know how much the Damascus State, which has hardly begun to exist yet, will be able to pay.

MR. BALFOUR: You are throwing upon Damascus and Mesopotamia a charge formerly borne by the whole Turkish Empire.

LORD CURZON: Does anybody know what was the subvention to Hussein before the war?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: I am afraid I do not.

COLONEL GRIBBON: I know there was a sum of about T.£1,000,000 budgeted for the Hejaz Railway, and that is all I remember.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We could easily find that out.

LORD CURZON: We should pay the subvention formerly paid by the Turks, which should be replaced as far as possible by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria, and leave the remainder open. As regards Mesopotamia, we talk here about possible subventions from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. I imagine if the British remain, as they probably will, in substantial control of the administration, that really would be a subsidy paid by us to him in the form of a subvention from Mesopotamia, and that in that case we should be at liberty to determine the amount, and take very good care that it was not less than he received from the Turk.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We shall have to assure him that he will not suffer.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes. I do not know whether it would be regarded as a fair charge upon, let us say, the Indian Moslems that they should pay to keep up the Holy Places. I do not know enough about the Moslem practice. They travel by sea, I suppose, do they not?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes.

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LORD CURZON: It would not be a charge upon Indian Moslems, but upon the Moslems of Mesopotamia.

MR. BALFOUR: I am thinking of this. You are restricting the area, and I wanted to extend the area, if possible. What this clause says, is that he is to receive, if possible, from Syria and Mesopotamia as much as he got from the Turkish Empire previously. That is rather a hard policy. If it was a proper thing for the Moslems elsewhere to do it, I should have thought we might ignore the Turkish Empire.

LORD CURZON: If we do that the other Powers will do the same. France will say, "Our Moslems in Algeria are as much interested as yours"; they would probably give a larger sum than we should, and there might be a rather unhealthy competition.

MR. BALFOUR: We should arrange among ourselves to see that he has not less than he had before.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Supposing we put it, "He ought not to suffer pecuniarily from his change of sovereignty"?

MR. BALFOUR: That would meet my view, and then go on, "The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced," and so on. Then I suggest in the last sentence we should strike out the words "small" and "sole," and leave it in this way: "There would, however, be no objection to the payment of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy, for the purpose of keeping open free caravan routes." Then we might add that he ought not to suffer pecuniarily.

LORD CURZON: "The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced as far as possible by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria, and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia, but he should not be the loser."

MR. MONTAGU: Would he not get more than before the war?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: As Sherif of Mecca, under a poor Government like Turkey, he would not get a large subvention. He has had an enormous stipend, as Lord Curzon says, for war purposes, and he will expect a considerable amount in excess of what he got from the Turk, now that he is King of the Hejaz. We have to face the fact that we shall have to pay him a great deal more, or otherwise he will probably abdicate.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: He has asked for a monetary compensation, as representing the Arab Federation, in respect of British control in Mesopotamia.

LORD CURZON: That has never been conceded by us. That is the old claim. We could give it as an act of grace, but he has no real claim to it.

MR. BALFOUR: Is it your view—a most natural view—that it is to our interest to continue something which is in strictness only justifiable because it pays us to give him money? Ought we, in other words, to go on, when the war is over, paying at least part of a subsidy which was originally given solely for war purposes?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think we must.

LORD CURZON: I do not think that was Sir Hamilton Grant's point. I think his point is that before the war the Sherif of Mecca, as he then was, received for a limited area and for restricted purposes a certain subvention from the French Government. Largely owing to our act, quite apart from what has happened in the war, he has become the Sovereign of a larger area and has greater responsibilities. He will say, "In proportion to the additional charge you put upon me, by so much must you increase the means by which I can meet it. I cannot look to Constantinople, and you must make up the balance," and it is an unanswerable position.

MR. BALFOUR: The larger his empire the more he requires from outside?

LORD CURZON: Certainly.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The Hejaz is a poor place.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: We shall have to give him more. He has learned to open his mouth very wide. As we have been so generous during the war, if we suddenly drop to the Turkish pre-war standard we shall find he will definitely abdicate, I think, which would be a disaster.

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MR. BALFOUR; Ought we not to face that in these resolutions?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Would you not say something like this: "In one way or another the King should not suffer pecuniarily from the result of the war, having regard to his increased responsibilities"?

LORD CURZON: I think Sir Hamilton Grant is right. Do you think we ought to put in the first two lines? We begin by saying, "It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the war to be subsidised either by Great Britain or any Christian nation," and then we proceed to devise the means by which he is to be subsidised by us. I should have thought it would be better to leave out our disclaimer in those two lines.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Would you like to say "*directly* subsidised?" I think it is undesirable on political grounds that we should keep the King of the Hejaz in our pay permanently.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: If we could get France and Italy, as Moslem Powers, to join us and to subsidise him purely on the ground that we are large Moslem Powers with Moslem subjects who are interested by their religion in the Holy Places in this particular country, and by a *communiqué* and by announcements make it clear that we were not doing it as Christian Protecting Powers, but as Moslem Powers in the interests of our own Moslem subjects who are interested in the well-being of the Holy Places, would not that be the best thing to do?

MR. MONTAGU: That, being a Christian nation, we have to act as a Moslem nation?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think in our capacity as a Moslem Power we might work under that.

LORD CURZON: I think I see my way now. May we retain the first sentence, and put in the word "directly"? "It is not desirable that the King of the Hejaz should continue after the war to be *directly* subsidised either by Great Britain or any *other* Christian Power. The subvention formerly paid to him by the Turks should be replaced as far as possible by annual subventions from the Arab State of Syria and possibly from the Arab States of Mesopotamia. These subventions might be paid to him as Keeper of the Holy Places. There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy, as great Moslem Powers, for the purpose of protecting the interests of their pilgrims," or words to that effect. Is that on the lines of your suggestion, Sir Hamilton Grant?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes.

LORD CURZON: There is nothing invidious in saying we are great Moslem Powers, because we are distinguished from the other Great Powers of the world in that regard. That is the ground of the subvention.

MR. BALFOUR: Will you add a rider, that he is not to have less than he had before?

LORD CURZON: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We have called ourselves a Christian Power; it is difficult to call ourselves a Moslem Power later on.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Say "European Power."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Say "in respect of their Moslem subjects." We are not a Moslem Power, strictly speaking.

LORD CURZON: "There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: "In respect of their Moslem subjects in the pilgrimage."

LORD CURZON: No, because anybody else who has Moslem subjects would claim to do the same. What Sir Hamilton Grant is after, and I agree, is that these three Powers are differentiated from any other Powers in the world by the greatness of their Moslem population and interests.

MR. BALFOUR: "As the Powers with the largest Moslem populations."

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LORD CURZON: There would be no objection to this: "Great Britain, France, and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations," or something to that effect.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That will do very well.

LORD CURZON: "For the purpose of protecting the interests of their pilgrims."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Will you not say merely "*possessing* large Moslem populations."

LORD CURZON: No. It is because the Moslem populations insist on going on the pilgrimage to Jeddah and Mecca. If it is merely that they are Moslems, you might as well say the Straits Settlements ought to join the scheme, because there are so many Malay Mohammedans; but they do not go much on pilgrimage, or, at any rate, less than the Indians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: By all means put in your words.

LORD CURZON: "There would, however, be no objection to the payment to him of a joint subsidy by Great Britain, France, and Italy, as Powers ruling large Moslem populations for protecting the interests of their pilgrims."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then add, "In any case, the King should not suffer pecu narily from the result of the war."

LORD CURZON: No. "He should not suffer from his change of sovereignty."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: He will become independent.

LORD CURZON: "From the change in his position."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, "from the change in his political position."

LORD CURZON: "(8) The Hejaz should not be called upon to contribute any annuity to the service of the Public Debt"—"*Ottoman* Public Debt" that should be.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: Yes. It is a small amount, and anybody could find out what it was.

LORD CURZON: Now comes the question of arms. "(9) It is hoped by an international convention to secure the prohibition of the export of arms and ammunition to all States in Asia Minor and Arabia which do not ask for a European advisory Power; but in view of its special position, the Hejaz should be excepted from this prohibition. The Powers should declare that they will not object to the Hejaz Government importing for its own use a reasonable quantity of arms and ammunition annually, provided that they are not exported or re-sold to private individuals without licence, and that the Government of the Hejaz adheres to the other terms of the convention. Great Britain, in view of her special interests in Arabia, should be entrusted by the League of Nations with the responsibility of seeing that these terms are carried out." Then comes No. 10: "The control and operation of the Hejaz Railway should be entrusted to a commission consisting of nominees of the King of the Hejaz, the Syrian State, and the Government of Palestine."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is a very detailed point to bring in, and it is doubtful to me whether that is the right way of dealing with these international railways.

LORD CURZON: It is rather premature, and we may take out No. 10 and come back to the question of arms.

MR. MONTAGU: How are we going to prevent it? I can understand preventing the import of arms, but how can we prevent the selling to private individuals?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We cannot. We can get an undertaking that he will not, and he will break it. That is the way we did with the blockade. What you do is to ration arms, not allowing him to import an immense quantity, but only what is reasonably necessary. You make out an estimate and find out what would be reasonable. If he wants to import more, he would have to make out a case for it. I am only guessing, but I suppose that is the way it would be done. I presume we shall say there shall be no trade in arms, if we are to be entrusted by the League of Nations. We shall say that we shall keep a gunboat on the coast, and say no arms shall come in.

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LORD CURZON: This is the first time that in these arrangements we are endeavouring to make about these Eastern territories we have brought in the League of Nations. I do not know why it is brought in. If you bring in the League of Nations solely with the object of giving us a disquisition about arms, they will not be content with that alone. They will say, "If you want us to go into the Hejaz, you ought only to go there, in whatever capacity you go, as our emissary." Why bring them in here at all?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You might leave them out, but you might have to bring them in sooner or later.

MR. MONTAGU: I think No. 9 should read: "The Powers should declare that they will not object to the Hejaz Government importing for its own use a reasonable quantity of arms and ammunition annually, provided that *the Government of the Hejaz adheres to the other terms of the convention*," and leave out all the rest. If Lord Robert Cecil is right, we could prevent the Hejaz Government, by blockade, from getting too many arms; what do you want to put it in for at all?

LORD CURZON: I think it gives a ground of protest if the King of the Hejaz proceeds to do what he would certainly do, unless checked.

MR. MONTAGU: We should say, "If you are selling them right and left, the amount you are importing is unreasonable, and we have only allowed you a reasonable quantity."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We must say, "You will not be allowed to export to private individuals unless you get a licence to do so."

LORD CURZON: I think it is worth while keeping it in.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Who is to give the licence?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Then we had better have the licence out. Will you say simply that we will ration arms, and then he can do anything he likes with them?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Would it not be better to hold over the special question of the Hejaz arms until the main arms question is settled by an international convention, and then adjust that, so far as it would be necessary, to the Hejaz? We do not know what the international convention is going to be at present, and this question must be based more or less on that international convention. Are we not rather putting the cart before the horse? There would have to be a special arrangement for the Hejaz, and I think we should hold that question over.

LORD CURZON: When will you get the international convention?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: It is in draft now.

LORD CURZON: But how far have you gone with the other Powers?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Nothing at all.

LORD CURZON: At the end of the war the King of the Hejaz might import an enormous quantity of arms, in order to put down the various rivals to his position inland. You want to have some check upon him, do you not?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Yes.

LORD CURZON: While the war is going on he has an excuse for a large import of arms, but after the war we want to check it.

MR. BALFOUR: I suppose you could not possibly allow him to import arms and make war upon the people you do not allow to get arms? That would be an impossible business, would it not, if you found him using his arms against Ibn Saud, for instance?

LORD CURZON: Ibn Saud gets arms as it is.

MR. MONTAGU: A reasonable quantity of arms. Sir Arthur Hirtzel says it would be the Government of the Hejaz that would issue the licence. I think it would be better to leave the words out, because, as it stands, it presupposes such a lot of things.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Would it not be better to leave this matter over until we see what we get out of the arms convention, and let clause 9 run in this way: "It

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is hoped by an international convention to secure the prohibition of the export of arms and ammunition to all States in Asia Minor and Arabia which do not ask for a European advisory Power, but, in view of its special position "——

MR. BALFOUR: "Some relaxation will have to be made in regard to the Hejaz."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. Would not that be better, and then leave out all the rest?

LORD CURZON: It is a Foreign Office matter.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Meantime, steps should be taken to prevent the import of arms into the Hejaz, except in the most reasonable quantities.

LORD CURZON: Who will take the steps until we have brought in Italy and France? We hold a dominant position in the Red Sea, and have the blockade on there still.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We can take steps to prevent an excessive quantity of arms being imported.

MR. BALFOUR: Would you say, "but in view of its peculiar position"——

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes—"special provision would have to be made with regard to the Hejaz. Meanwhile, steps should be taken to prevent the excessive importation of arms into that country." I have said that we should take steps, but that is Sir Hamilton Grant's suggestion.

LORD CURZON: They would be taken by us. Do you mean at and after the end of the war?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes, until definite arrangements have been concluded with France and Italy.

LORD CURZON: Then all the rest comes out.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. We will now revert to clause 2 and the restrictions on sovereignty. Do you want a modification of No. 2?

MR. BALFOUR: I should be content if you put in a few words in the last line, "if they prove to be necessary." I have not discovered what the restrictions on sovereignty are. I do not admit the importation of arms is a restriction. You do not allow arms to go in unless under certain conditions, and that is no restriction on sovereignty.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: You are not allowing him to have diplomatic agents at his Court?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No diplomatic status or functions.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: He is to have consular and pilgrimage agents, but they are not to be diplomatic agents.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You cannot read the thing without seeing he is put in a position which a European Power would not be content to occupy.

MR. BALFOUR: As you have mentioned that, I do not know how that is consistent with the statement in No. 3, that his foreign relations are to be managed wholly by himself.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We do not say that. We say they should not be controlled.

MR. BALFOUR: In the amended form, we have practically said that he is to have nobody controlling his foreign relations.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Nor will they.

MR. BALFOUR: Then all we do is to restrict ourselves to a diplomatic agent there. That is not restricting his sovereignty.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: May he have an Ambassador at Paris? It is meant to stop that, but whether it actually does it, I do not know.

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LORD CURZON: The question has arisen over and over again with Afghanistan. The Amir of Afghanistan has been trying to appoint representatives of his own to foreign Courts, and the Russians were always trying to get him to agree to the appointment of a Russian representative there. In the Anglo-Russian Convention we went so far, if I remember right, as to allow that a commercial agent of Russia should be there, but that was all. In the whole course of our relations with the Amir of Afghanistan we have continually imposed restrictions upon his independence and sovereignty in respect of representatives of foreign Powers at his Court.

MR. BALFOUR: That is harmonious, because we do not allow him to have what relations he likes with foreign Courts. We specifically say the King of the Hejaz is to have what relations he likes with anybody.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: We do not control the Hejaz, there is that difference.

LORD CURZON: You have raised an important point which had not occurred to me. You mean, that while we are saying that our representatives there, or the representative of any foreign Power there, should only be, so to speak, a consular agent, and should not have any diplomatic status, there is nothing to prevent the King of the Hejaz from sending a Minister to Paris or London?

MR. BALFOUR: To look behind words and at things, there is nothing to prevent the gentleman who goes out as a commercial agent making what proposals he likes upon any subject under Heaven, so that it is all a sham, really. The real essence of the thing is this: No. 3 says plainly that he is to manage his own foreign affairs. Then it does not matter what you do after that. The French will send in a man to look after their traders, and if that man discusses general politics you cannot stop him, and you cannot complain.

LORD CURZON: Are we not getting into a position in which the King of the Hejaz will say: "I am a King, you have recognised my independence; you call me 'His Majesty,' I have full power to send an Ambassador or a Minister to London or Paris or Rome, and I propose to do so." But, meanwhile, we have disabled ourselves from having any corresponding man at his Court, and would have to put up with a small person living at Jeddah and exercising functions in regard to pilgrims and trade alone. That is an anomalous position.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The reason why it was not provided for was that it was never suggested that he should send an agent to any Power. I agree, if that question arose, he certainly ought not to be allowed to do so. I think he ought to be kept as perfectly independent, but not having any diplomatic existence; that is to say, we ought not to interfere with him at all. The whole reason for not interfering is that we do not want it to be said that, being a religious personage, he is under the control of any other Power at all, or under the influence of any other Power. The whole object of that will be gone if he sets out to make alliances with foreign Powers.

MR. BALFOUR: We cannot prevent it, under clause 3.

LORD CURZON: Can we put it in clause 5? Clause 5 is now confined to the status of our representatives. It runs: "It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agents kept by the Powers in the Hejaz should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade. Correspondingly, the King of the Hejaz should not be represented by diplomatic representatives at foreign Courts."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Would it not be enough to say, "by the Powers in the Hejaz or by the Hejaz at foreign Courts"?

MR. BALFOUR: Is it not more of a sham than is permissible to be put into a series of resolutions? You say: "You are not going to be controlled." If you say you are going to send commercial agents there, you cannot prevent him sending commercial agents here. To say that that agent is not to wear a particular uniform, is not to be accredited to the King—which is all you do by saying he is not to be a diplomatic representative—is mere *camouflage*. There is nothing in it at all. He can negotiate how he likes; by letter, if he likes.

MR. MONTAGU: If that view is adopted, would you take out the last sentence in No. 5?

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LORD CURZON: Mr. Balfour, the position you have sketched would really, in practice, be an intolerable one. It would mean that while the King would be at liberty, having appointed a Minister here, to make any representations to the Foreign Office that he chose, through a Minister of considerable rank, you yourself would have no means of communicating, in reply, except by telegram to a commercial agent, who would be useless for the purpose. There ought to be some reciprocity.

MR. BALFOUR: That is a matter of form. You can appoint what man you like. I might ask Sir Louis Mallet to go as commercial agent in a very important case.

LORD CURZON: Really, we act up to the word as well as the spirit of our undertakings. We do not contemplate anything more than a man for the pilgrimage.

MR. BALFOUR: That is what we all contemplate.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: This is a serious point, and it is not a matter of form. You are going to confine it to the pilgrimage. I am rather sorry we put in the words "or trade." I should like to confine it to pilgrimage and have no other agents there. For one thing, I would exclude all German agents. I do not see why they should have an agent at all in the Hejaz. No doubt you can, and the French do, use their commercial agents for diplomatic purposes, but they have to do it *sub rosa*, and under great difficulties, and if it is found out we make strong observations. It hampers the thing altogether, and it does to some extent put the Hejaz—and that is the object of all these things—outside and isolated from all international politics. That is what I understand is the object.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: That is the object.

MR. BALFOUR: That is so.

LORD CURZON: You cannot exclude trade. At the present moment we have a Vice-Consul at Jeddah.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You cannot exclude trade, perhaps, but I agree that it ought to be confined strictly to trade, and if we catch them at anything else strong representations ought to be made.

MR. BALFOUR: Will you read section 3 as it now stands?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: "It is not desirable that the King's foreign relations should be controlled by any European Power, and no such claim should be made by His Majesty's Government."

MR. BALFOUR: I think that would work in with it. If somebody said, "Does that mean he is to be free to do anything he likes?" you will have to say, "No, it does not."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It means, "We do not want to control you, but you are not to enter into foreign relations at all."

MR. BALFOUR: That is it; I accept that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think that is a sound policy.

LORD CURZON: Then we must put in something in No. 5. I suggest: "It would follow, and should be stipulated, that any agents kept by the Powers in the Hejaz should have no diplomatic status or functions, but should be confined to purposes connected with the pilgrimage or trade. Equally, the King of the Hejaz should not be allowed to be represented by diplomatic agents at foreign Courts."

MR. BALFOUR: He would not be allowed to send a representative to a coronation, for instance?

LORD CURZON: Yes, surely. He would be a mere delegate to a ceremonial function.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think he ought to do anything of the kind. He ought to confine himself to a telegram.

LORD CURZON: We have now passed the whole of the Hejaz Resolutions, and will take the remainder of Arabia on another day.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 18, 1918.

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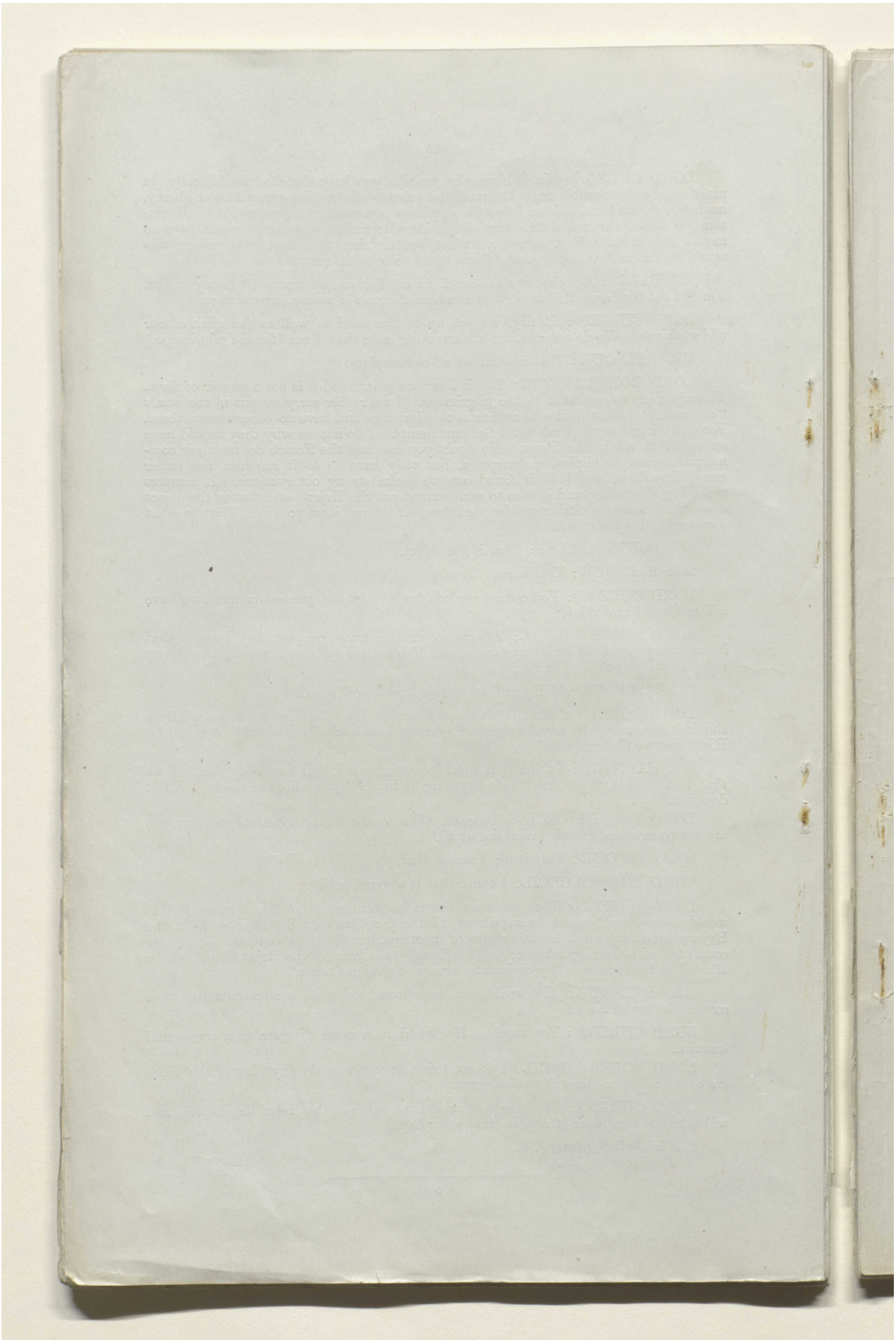

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Lord Curzon.

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

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E.C. 45th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, December 19, 1918, *at* 3 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended :—

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

MR. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR CHARLES M. MARLING, K.C.M.G., C.B., Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Teheran.

SIR A. HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for India.

SIR A. H. GRANT, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

MR. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence (representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff).

Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. KISCH, D.S.O., R.E., War Office.

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

MR. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

[365—44]

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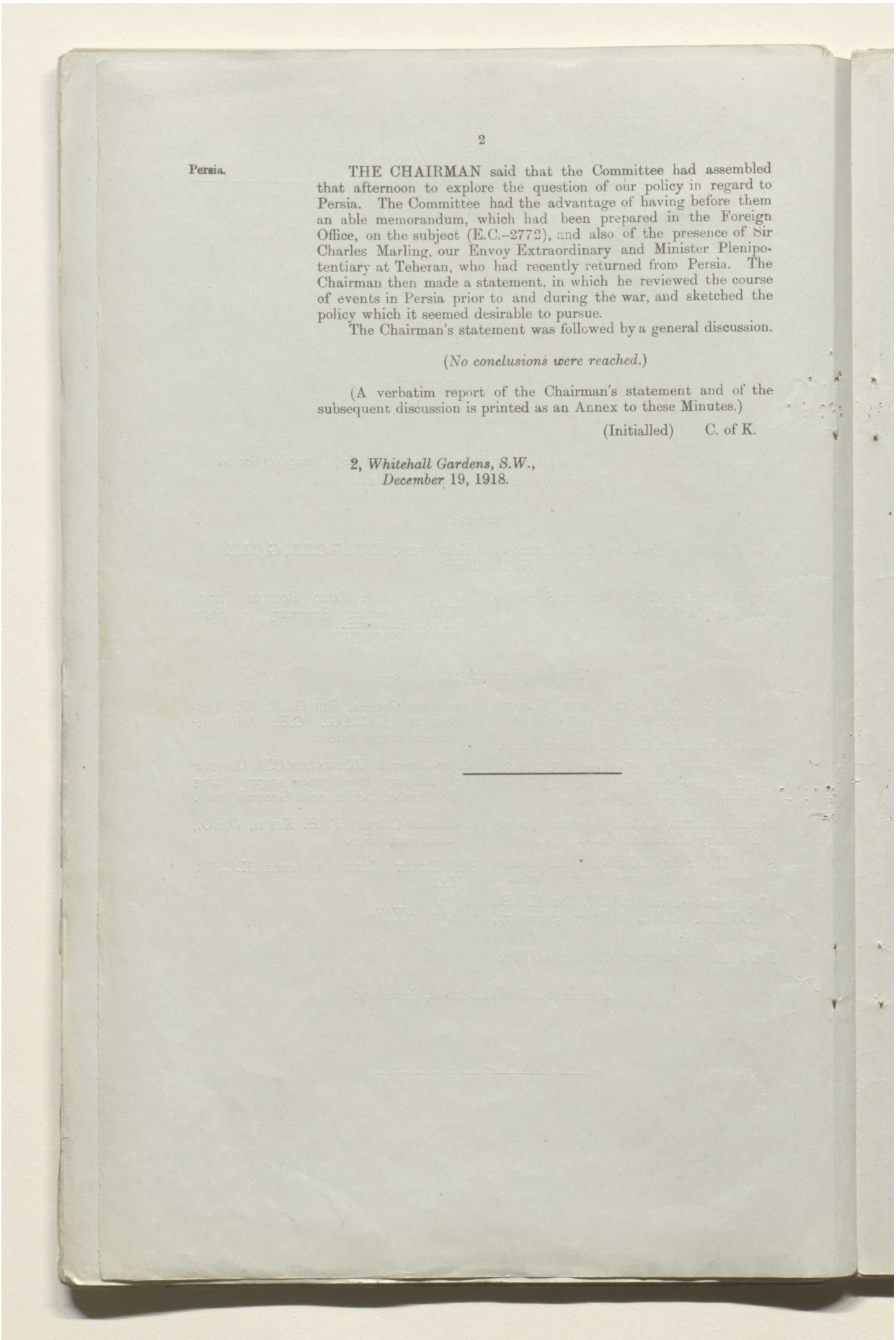

Persia.

THE CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had assembled that afternoon to explore the question of our policy in regard to Persia. The Committee had the advantage of having before them an able memorandum, which had been prepared in the Foreign Office, on the subject (E.C.–2772), and also of the presence of Sir Charles Marling, our Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Teheran, who had recently returned from Persia. The Chairman then made a statement, in which he reviewed the course of events in Persia prior to and during the war, and sketched the policy which it seemed desirable to pursue.

The Chairman's statement was followed by a general discussion.

(*No conclusions were reached.*)

(A verbatim report of the Chairman's statement and of the subsequent discussion is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.)

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 19, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, December 19, 1918, at 3 P.M.

PERSIA.

LORD CURZON: We have met to-day to discuss the question of Persia and the policy which it is desirable to pursue with regard to that distressful country, either at the Peace Conference or elsewhere. We have had a very able and exhaustive paper,* prepared for us by the Foreign Office, covering almost every aspect of the case, and we further have the advantage here of the presence of Sir Charles Marling, who for so long a time in moments of great emergency, difficulty, and crisis, ably sustained our interests in that country.

In order to form an opinion as to the policy which we should pursue with regard to Persia, we ought, I think, to place our policy in due perspective to the facts of the situation as they exist in that country. A good many of us in this room have been engaged in the effort to grapple with the Persian problem during the past few years, and it is one of the most puzzling, and in some respects one of the most discouraging, with which we have had to deal.

We are face to face, in the first place, with a country, the Government of which is weak and incompetent, the ruling classes corrupt and extortionate, the monarch worthless, and the lower classes in a deplorable condition intellectually, physically and materially. Persia would be bankrupt if it were not for our money, and she would at this moment be in a state of revolution if it were not for our troops. These difficulties, which have been growing steadily for a long time, have become worse instead of better in the progress of the war. Disorder, chronic in Persia and breaking out afresh at intervals during the war, has been rampant in almost every part of the land. Her territory has been invaded from more quarters than one, particularly on the west, and during the last year or two any semblance of order or government has only existed in Persia because of the force that we have been called upon to deploy in the background.

There is a general consensus of opinion that if we were to withdraw that force at this moment, which on every *a priori* ground we should be only too delighted to do, there would be revolution, Bolshevism, and anarchy of a very dangerous description in the northern provinces and in the whole of the country conditions scarcely distinguishable from chaos.

What has been our policy towards Persia in these circumstances during the last four years of war? Every one of us knows well, although perhaps the Persians would be reluctant to admit it, that at the bottom we have no other desire, in our own interests as well as in the interests of the Persians themselves, than to build up, establish and fortify the independence and integrity of Persia, even although we have been compelled by the exigencies of the case to take steps which are capable of being represented as the very antithesis of that policy and principle. We have been obliged to embark upon a military intervention, which three or four years ago many of us at this table would have deemed not only impracticable, but wrong. Throughout this period we have had hanging round our necks the unhappy legacy of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. I will not enter into the old question, about which my views are well known, as to the policy or even as to the details of that arrangement, which from the start I thought not only unfair but calamitous. No one will, at any rate, dispute that it has entirely failed of its results. The object of the agreement was to stop the eternal friction and jealousy that existed in Persia between the Russians and ourselves. The result of the agreement was that owing to the form in which it was carried out, it outraged the Persian sentiments of nationality and independence, that so far from putting a stopper upon the actions of Russia by giving her a free hand, it encouraged her attitude in the north of Persia and in Teheran; and, most unfortunate of all, that it placed us in the position—at any rate in Persian eyes—of being tarred with the Russian brush, of being identified with her policy, and of carrying upon our shoulders the burden of all the offences which she had committed.

Thus, owing to these various conditions, you have the position that during the years of war we have been faced with a Persia—I am speaking of the Government

* E.C.-2772.

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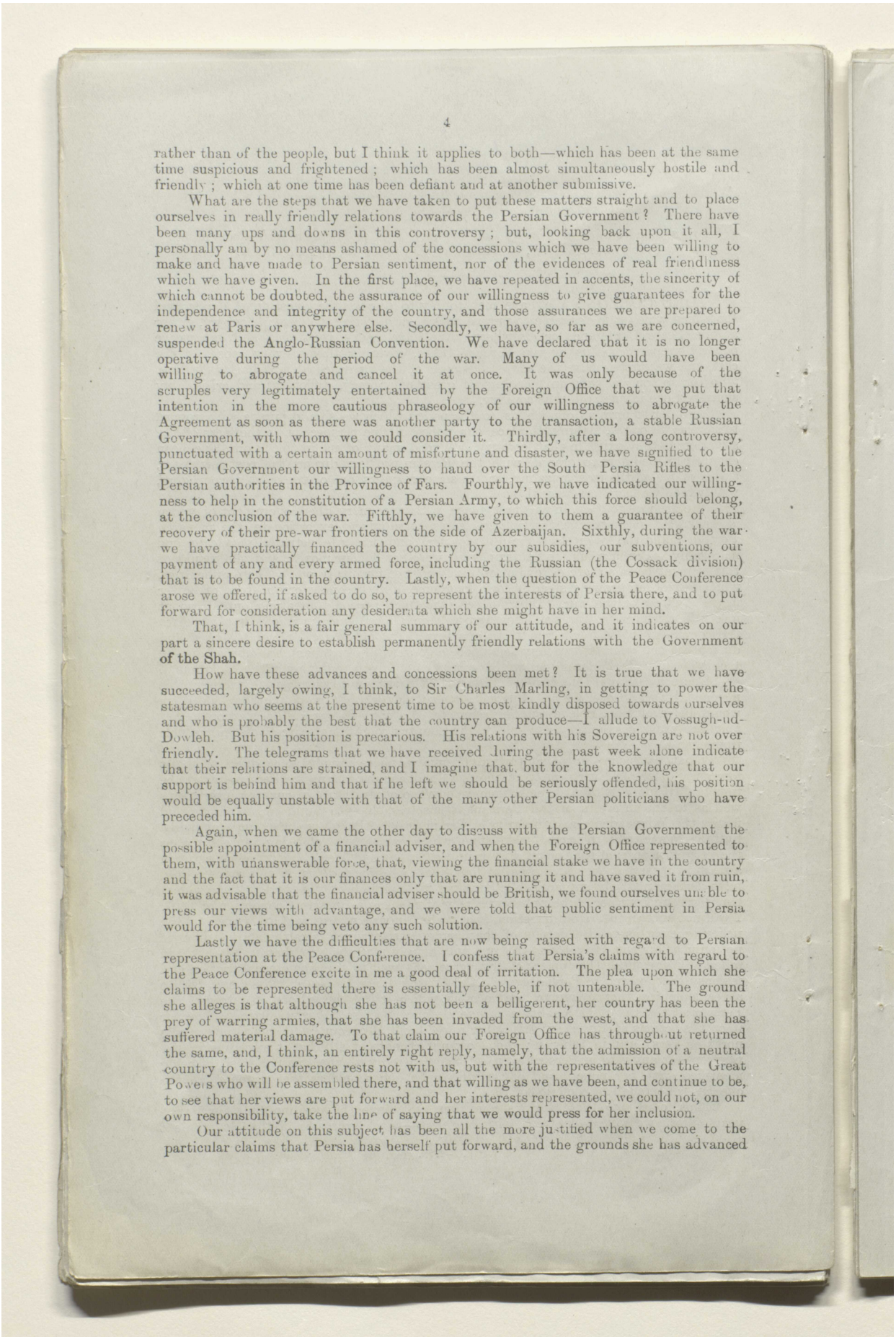

rather than of the people, but I think it applies to both—which has been at the same time suspicious and frightened; which has been almost simultaneously hostile and friendly; which at one time has been defiant and at another submissive.

What are the steps that we have taken to put these matters straight and to place ourselves in really friendly relations towards the Persian Government? There have been many ups and downs in this controversy; but, looking back upon it all, I personally am by no means ashamed of the concessions which we have been willing to make and have made to Persian sentiment, nor of the evidences of real friendliness which we have given. In the first place, we have repeated in accents, the sincerity of which cannot be doubted, the assurance of our willingness to give guarantees for the independence and integrity of the country, and those assurances we are prepared to renew at Paris or anywhere else. Secondly, we have, so far as we are concerned, suspended the Anglo-Russian Convention. We have declared that it is no longer operative during the period of the war. Many of us would have been willing to abrogate and cancel it at once. It was only because of the scruples very legitimately entertained by the Foreign Office that we put that intention in the more cautious phraseology of our willingness to abrogate the Agreement as soon as there was another party to the transaction, a stable Russian Government, with whom we could consider it. Thirdly, after a long controversy, punctuated with a certain amount of misfortune and disaster, we have signified to the Persian Government our willingness to hand over the South Persia Rifles to the Persian authorities in the Province of Fars. Fourthly, we have indicated our willingness to help in the constitution of a Persian Army, to which this force should belong, at the conclusion of the war. Fifthly, we have given to them a guarantee of their recovery of their pre-war frontiers on the side of Azerbaijan. Sixthly, during the war we have practically financed the country by our subsidies, our subventions, our payment of any and every armed force, including the Russian (the Cossack division) that is to be found in the country. Lastly, when the question of the Peace Conference arose we offered, if asked to do so, to represent the interests of Persia there, and to put forward for consideration any desiderata which she might have in her mind.

That, I think, is a fair general summary of our attitude, and it indicates on our part a sincere desire to establish permanently friendly relations with the Government of the Shah.

How have these advances and concessions been met? It is true that we have succeeded, largely owing, I think, to Sir Charles Marling, in getting to power the statesman who seems at the present time to be most kindly disposed towards ourselves and who is probably the best that the country can produce—I allude to Vossugh-ud-Dowleh. But his position is precarious. His relations with his Sovereign are not over friendly. The telegrams that we have received during the past week alone indicate that their relations are strained, and I imagine that, but for the knowledge that our support is behind him and that if he left we should be seriously offended, his position would be equally unstable with that of the many other Persian politicians who have preceded him.

Again, when we came the other day to discuss with the Persian Government the possible appointment of a financial adviser, and when the Foreign Office represented to them, with unanswerable force, that, viewing the financial stake we have in the country and the fact that it is our finances only that are running it and have saved it from ruin, it was advisable that the financial adviser should be British, we found ourselves unable to press our views with advantage, and we were told that public sentiment in Persia would for the time being veto any such solution.

Lastly we have the difficulties that are now being raised with regard to Persian representation at the Peace Conference. I confess that Persia's claims with regard to the Peace Conference excite in me a good deal of irritation. The plea upon which she claims to be represented there is essentially feeble, if not untenable. The ground she alleges is that although she has not been a belligerent, her country has been the prey of warring armies, that she has been invaded from the west, and that she has suffered material damage. To that claim our Foreign Office has throughout returned the same, and, I think, an entirely right reply, namely, that the admission of a neutral country to the Conference rests not with us, but with the representatives of the Great Powers who will be assembled there, and that willing as we have been, and continue to be, to see that her views are put forward and her interests represented, we could not, on our own responsibility, take the line of saying that we would press for her inclusion.

Our attitude on this subject has been all the more justified when we come to the particular claims that Persia has herself put forward, and the grounds she has advanced

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as the reasons for which she desires the assistance of the Conference assembled at Paris. We have been told by her Government that she wants to press for the abrogation of all the conventions that may be considered prejudicial to her independence and integrity; and, in so far as the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 is concerned, we have shown our willingness to meet her. She then desires to raise the question of compensation for damages caused to her, ignoring the much greater expense and losses that have been inflicted upon others, including ourselves. She wishes to plead for economic liberty, whatever that may mean, for the right to make commercial treaties and to set up a new customs tariff. Finally, she wishes to press for the abolition of the capitulations, or rather of those clauses in the various treaties with her which are called capitulations in the case of other countries.

It is clear that the majority of these matters have nothing to do with the Peace Conference at all. The Peace Conference is to settle the issues that have arisen between States of the world who have been at war, and I hope that we shall adhere strongly to the position that it is no part of the Peace Conference to take up the grievances and complaints of other States who may have been affected by the war, although they have not been directly in it, and who want either to readjust their boundaries, or to make more favourable conditions for themselves in the future. That attitude has been taken up consistently, and I venture to think quite rightly, by the Foreign Office. Only five minutes before I came down here I saw that it has been strongly supported by the French Government, or rather it is the attitude which they have taken up on their own account. Here is a note, handed in by M. Cambon, and representing the views of M. Pichon, in which he indicates that in the view of the French Government Persia has no more right to be represented at the Conference than other neutral States; she is at liberty to address to the Allies memoranda if she deems it necessary, but she is not to be allowed to interfere in the discussions in any way. The French Government desire to know if the views of the British Government are in accord with those which have been thus expressed. The following reply was addressed only two days ago by Mr. Balfour to M. Cambon: "The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the French Ambassador, and in reply to his Excellency's notes of the 11th and 12th December regarding the desire of the Persian Government to send a representative to the Peace Conference to be held in Paris, has the honour to inform M. Cambon that in the course of last month he instructed Sir P. Cox to inform the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Peace Congress itself would alone be able to decide authoritatively the question whether and in what manner non-belligerent Governments should be formally represented at the Congress. Sir P. Cox was further authorised to state that His Majesty's Government would welcome the presence in Paris, the seat of the Conference, of a representative of the Persian Government with whom it would be possible for His Majesty's Government to discuss any questions which might come up at the Conference in connection with Persia, and also to repeat a promise previously given that His Majesty's Government would, in so far as it might lie in their power, certainly advocate participation of Persia at the Conference if it were eventually decided to admit Powers other than those which had been actual belligerents." That is a concise summary of the attitude which I have described, and, with regard to Persian appearance at the Peace Conference, it only remains for me at this stage to allude to the representation upon which the Persian Government have decided. We were anxious that Vossugh-ud-Dowleh should be their representative; obviously he would have been the best man for the post; but the Shah, whether he does not wish him to go to Europe or whether he is anxious to keep him there, has at any rate refused on the ground that he cannot be spared, and we understand that the two Persian representatives will be the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mashaver-ul-Mamalek, and another official who I understand is the brother of the Persian Minister in London.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is so.

LORD CURZON: I believe that neither of them is a candidate whom we should have chosen and that we cannot rely too implicitly upon the attitude which they are likely to take. I shall have a word or two more to say about the Persian representatives and their probable policy in a few moments' time. What I have said so far is really in the nature of a preface to the discussion of what our policy now ought to be.

I gave expression at the beginning to the extreme reluctance with which every one of us has found himself embarked on these proceedings, military, diplomatic, and otherwise, in Persia during the war. The natural inclination of anyone who hears those views

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is to say, "Very well, why then do you not leave her alone? Why do you not let Persia stew in her own juice? Why not clear out if these people have no sense of order? If they are incapable of understanding the obligations of international loyalty and friendship, why not leave them alone?" That is a very plausible and attractive view, but it really is impracticable. We cannot for two reasons leave Persia to slip into ruin; first, because it would be absolutely fatal to her own future and prosperity and, secondly, because it would be scarcely less dangerous to ourselves. Our interests in Persia, which I need not elaborate because they are the commonplaces of this matter, diplomatic, commercial, telegraphic—they cover a dozen different spheres—are too great to allow us to treat Persia with lordly indifference. And observe this—that the whole position has changed since the beginning of the war in the direction not of reducing but of magnifying those interests. Hitherto Persia has been a country linked with countries on our borders, Baluchistan and Afghanistan. Now we have gone into Mesopotamia. We all of us realise that one inevitable result of the war will be that in some form or another we shall remain in Mesopotamia. Therefore you will in future have to face a double Indian frontier touching Persian soil, the Baluch and Afghan frontier on the East, and the Mesopotamian frontier on the West. When I call it Indian, I do not mean Indian as distinct from British, but I mean that our influence there must be predominant. Mesopotamia has become a British interest. I only call it an Indian interest because it is in that part of the world. Therefore you have the situation now that Persia, instead of being a solitary figure moving about in a chronic state of disorder on the glacis of the Indian fortress, has the Indian frontier on one side of her and what is tantamount to a British frontier on the other.

Another illustration of the degree to which the situation has changed in the way of increase rather than reduction of our interests is what has happened in the war itself. When the war began, when we used to sit at this table, if anybody had said to me that we should eventually have to send our troops from Baghdad to Hamadan and from Hamadan to the Caspian, I should have looked upon that as ludicrous, and yet against the will of every one of us we were compelled to take that step.

Thirdly, there is yet another condition which tends to the increase of our interests and that is the position of the oilfields. I need not go into the whole question of the oil, but you have only to consult the Admiralty to realise the enormous importance which they attach to the oilfields in the region of the Karun.

All these considerations point to the conclusion which I venture to place before the Committee, that our stake in Persia is a greater and not a less one in consequence of the war.

That being so, what are the needs that we now must set before ourselves as regards the future? Firstly, we must insist upon maintaining there in whatever form (we will come to the form in a moment) the general political predominance which is justified and demanded by the interests I have described. Secondly, I imagine we must maintain in some form or another the force known as the eastern cordon running up from the Gulf in the south to Khorassan in the north and standing as a screen in front of our frontier in Baluchistan and the Afghan frontier further to the north.

Thirdly, it is out of the question that, for the time being at any rate, we shall give up the military line which we have been forced to take up on the road from Baghdad viâ Kermanshah and Hamadan to the Caspian, and which—I attach great importance to this—we are strengthening as rapidly as possible by means of a railway. We have not time to discuss railways this afternoon. The railway policy in Persia will have to be carefully thought out; but whatever decisions are arrived at, the one that will meet with universal assent is that that railway will have to be protracted and that it should become one of the chief instruments both in ensuring the political security and promoting the regeneration of Persia.

Fourthly, we are bound to keep up our position in the south because of our interests in the Gulf and because of the trade routes that go from the Gulf into the interior.

Lastly, the financial sacrifices that we have made, and as far as I can see must continue to make in Persia, must have some result. We really cannot continue to go on pouring our millions into the abyss and getting nothing for them. We have become so profligate in the war that we hardly think in millions now; we almost think in billions. If anybody in the Treasury were to draw up a record of what our Persian policy, however infructuous in many ways it has been, has cost us in the last four years, it would, I believe, stagger even those who sit at this table.

These seem to me to be the needs which we ought to bear in mind. What is the method by which we can succeed in securing and enforcing them? There is a general recognition of the fact that Persia is too weak to stand alone, that she must have

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somebody, some Power, some force behind her. Who is it to be? A little earlier the Persians themselves had great hopes of America. America showed a very benign and friendly interest in them, sending missions and spending large sums of money and indeed conducting a mild flirtation. Undoubtedly the Persian nationalists seem, from the days when they employed Shuster, to have contemplated a day when America might come definitely to their assistance. I do not know what the policy of America is, but I do know that from all that we learn of the views of President Wilson it is extremely unlikely that his Government would be willing to undertake any considerable responsibilities in Persia. They may be compelled to take them elsewhere. I am more sceptical about that than many of my friends. That they will undertake them in Persia I am unable to believe. I am confirmed in that belief by reports that have come to us in the reports of Judson's mission.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think that we need argue that.

LORD CURZON: I will say no more about it. Neither need I say anything more about France. It is certain that her responsibilities are already too great for her to undertake further burdens in Persia.

On this point the Government of India, who have throughout been anxious to adopt a friendly and conciliatory policy, make the proposal that we should continue to give Persia arms, money, financial advisers, &c., that we should give her in fact a chance of standing on her own legs, and, observing as much reticence as we can, but giving her material assistance, leave her to fight her own battles. In theory that is a very sound policy, but in practice it does not work. It is what we have been trying to do for years without the slightest result. We have only to read the reply of Sir Percy Cox to see that plausible as such a theory is, it must almost inevitably break down in practice. If that be so, we are then driven to consider either the selection of some neutral State, or of curselves in combination with a neutral State. There seems in the papers to be a general agreement that among the neutral States Belgium is the best fitted, or perhaps I should rather put it the least unfitted, for the task. One knows well what it means putting a small neutral State in charge of that kind of job. In the first place they have not the traditions nor the experience; they do not understand what the government of Orientals is. Efficiency is not the ideal with them that it is with us, and their tendency is to embark upon a policy of intrigue. Sir Charles Marling and others know pretty well what our experience has been of that sort of thing, and though the circumstances of the war have perhaps put the Belgians into different relations to ourselves, and though it may be necessary to fall back upon their assistance, I should not myself, in the interests of Persia, regard Persia in charge of the Belgians as justifying any great hopes for the future regeneration of that country. I see in the papers that Belgium is put first among the possible candidates and Norway second. That Norway can have any experience of this sort of thing is absolutely out of the question. Her loyalty may be unquestioned, but I should have thought that her capacity was a very doubtful factor.

Now we come to Great Britain. Our stake is the greatest, our knowledge of these parts of the world by far the most profound; our experience extends over a much longer period of time. We are the people naturally and inevitably to do this thing. But then comes the question. Can we do it? Can we undertake all these responsibilities? Can we find the staffs—the men? Shall we and the Indian Empire be able to stand the strain, or will it be too great for us? Those who are impressed with these views seem to favour the idea of what I have described as a joint mandate—Great Britain standing in the background as the purse-holder and the general dictator of policy and the neutral State, Belgium or another, managing the administration of the country. I do not know whether that particular experiment has ever been tried—the big country in the background, whose interests are predominant, and a smaller country through its officials managing its affairs, relying at every stage on the financial and moral support of the big Power, and endeavouring to act with loyalty both to the country and the Government they serve and to the big Power standing in the background. I should have thought that it was rather a perilous experiment.

My argument seems to be leading to an *impasse*, but at this stage I take my parable from what was said to me only last week by the former Regent of Persia, the Nasr-ul-Mulk, now resident in this country, who is in close touch with and personally known to the Envoys coming over here. He came to see me, and I think he has been to the Foreign Office too. He probably talked to me with greater frankness than to almost anybody else, because we were at college together, and have been intimate friends ever since. He came to talk to me about the line that was likely to be taken by

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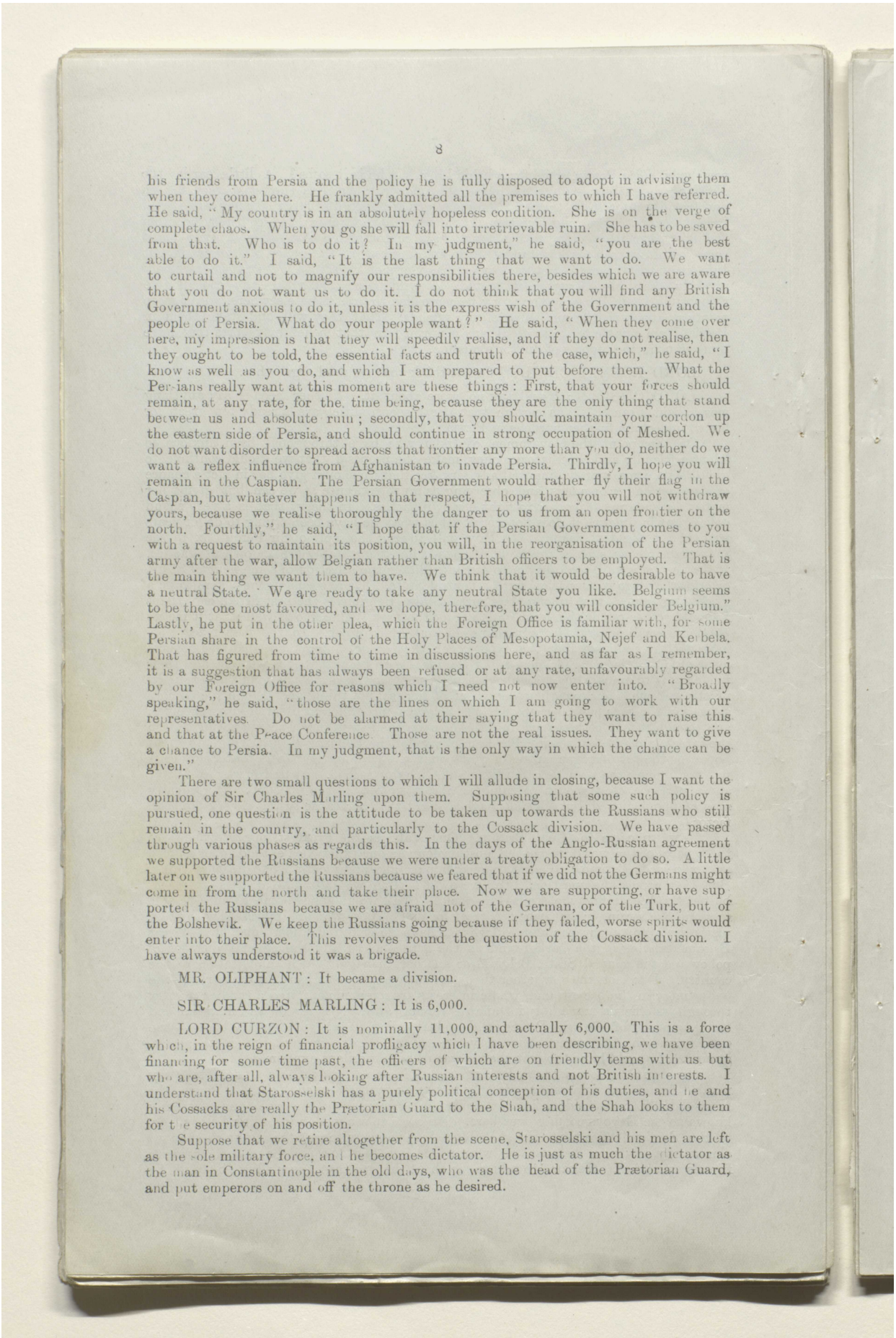

his friends from Persia and the policy he is fully disposed to adopt in advising them when they come here. He frankly admitted all the premises to which I have referred. He said, "My country is in an absolutely hopeless condition. She is on the verge of complete chaos. When you go she will fall into irretrievable ruin. She has to be saved from that. Who is to do it? In my judgment," he said, "you are the best able to do it." I said, "It is the last thing that we want to do. We want to curtail and not to magnify our responsibilities there, besides which we are aware that you do not want us to do it. I do not think that you will find any British Government anxious to do it, unless it is the express wish of the Government and the people of Persia. What do your people want?" He said, "When they come over here, my impression is that they will speedily realise, and if they do not realise, then they ought to be told, the essential facts and truth of the case, which," he said, "I know as well as you do, and which I am prepared to put before them. What the Persians really want at this moment are these things: First, that your forces should remain, at any rate, for the time being, because they are the only thing that stand between us and absolute ruin; secondly, that you should maintain your cordon up the eastern side of Persia, and should continue in strong occupation of Meshed. We do not want disorder to spread across that frontier any more than you do, neither do we want a reflex influence from Afghanistan to invade Persia. Thirdly, I hope you will remain in the Caspian. The Persian Government would rather fly their flag in the Caspian, but whatever happens in that respect, I hope that you will not withdraw yours, because we realise thoroughly the danger to us from an open frontier on the north. Fourthly," he said, "I hope that if the Persian Government comes to you with a request to maintain its position, you will, in the reorganisation of the Persian army after the war, allow Belgian rather than British officers to be employed. That is the main thing we want them to have. We think that it would be desirable to have a neutral State. We are ready to take any neutral State you like. Belgium seems to be the one most favoured, and we hope, therefore, that you will consider Belgium." Lastly, he put in the other plea, which the Foreign Office is familiar with, for some Persian share in the control of the Holy Places of Mesopotamia, Nejef and Kerbela. That has figured from time to time in discussions here, and as far as I remember, it is a suggestion that has always been refused or at any rate, unfavourably regarded by our Foreign Office for reasons which I need not now enter into. "Broadly speaking," he said, "those are the lines on which I am going to work with our representatives. Do not be alarmed at their saying that they want to raise this and that at the Peace Conference. Those are not the real issues. They want to give a chance to Persia. In my judgment, that is the only way in which the chance can be given."

There are two small questions to which I will allude in closing, because I want the opinion of Sir Charles Marling upon them. Supposing that some such policy is pursued, one question is the attitude to be taken up towards the Russians who still remain in the country, and particularly to the Cossack division. We have passed through various phases as regards this. In the days of the Anglo-Russian agreement we supported the Russians because we were under a treaty obligation to do so. A little later on we supported the Russians because we feared that if we did not the Germans might come in from the north and take their place. Now we are supporting, or have supported the Russians because we are afraid not of the German, or of the Turk, but of the Bolshevik. We keep the Russians going because if they failed, worse spirits would enter into their place. This revolves round the question of the Cossack division. I have always understood it was a brigade.

MR. OLIPHANT: It became a division.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: It is 6,000.

LORD CURZON: It is nominally 11,000, and actually 6,000. This is a force which, in the reign of financial profligacy which I have been describing, we have been financing for some time past, the officers of which are on friendly terms with us, but who are, after all, always looking after Russian interests and not British interests. I understand that Starosselski has a purely political conception of his duties, and he and his Cossacks are really the Prætorian Guard to the Shah, and the Shah looks to them for the security of his position.

Suppose that we retire altogether from the scene, Starosselski and his men are left as the sole military force, and he becomes dictator. He is just as much the dictator as the man in Constantinople in the old days, who was the head of the Prætorian Guard, and put emperors on and off the throne as he desired.

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I should like to put to our advisers here the question whether the time has not arrived when we should adopt a different attitude towards the Russians in Persia, and cut ourselves adrift from them (I do not say abruptly), altogether, and not deal with them as if they were likely to be a force in the future. That, I say, would fit in with the policy we have already gone in for of a national army after the war, to which contributions would be made from the South Persia Rifles, and such of the old Swedish gendarmerie as are left, and the Cossack division in the north. I venture to suggest that.

The only other topic which might be worthy of discussion I reserve, namely, that of the railways, which is hardly pertinent on the present occasion, because it is not likely to come up at the Peace Conference.

I have given this general review by way of clearing the ground, and if my conclusions are not decisive I hope that we shall be able to put them into a more fixed shape with the help of those here.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should like your view, Sir Charles, on the general situation, and I am sure that the Committee would like it very much. What do you consider we ought to aim at in Persia?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I think that it is necessary to aim at bringing about some Government which will maintain order—very little more than that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Do you see amongst the Persians any possibility of a native Government?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: No, there is absolutely none. There is no party in Persia which wants reform or reasonable administration of any sort or kind. There are a few individuals, but very very few, and they are very much in the hands of their friends. Avarice is the great thing. They are absolutely incapable of doing anything. They have no support from anybody.

LORD CURZON: Is the present Shah worse even than his predecessors, difficult as that is?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I should think that on the whole he is.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Because he is younger, or more vicious?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: He is more fatalist. He is more cowardly. I should say that he is more avaricious and quite as self-indulgent, and I think that he has more brains.

LORD CURZON: What, in your view, are the Persian Government and the Shah at the head of it aiming at? The pleas they put forward to the Conference are intended, no doubt, to bolster up their independence. What have they really in their minds? Does Nasr-ul-Mulk represent the views of anybody in Persia, or do they want to be left alone, or are they conscious of the necessity of having some support behind them?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The small group represented by Vossugh-ud-Dowleh and Akbar Mirza do wish for support. The latter was Foreign Minister in Sipahdar's Cabinet.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: They have a genuine concern?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: They have a certain wish.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not see that these other fellows have anything really to gain by good government at all.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The clamour against us is put forward simply as a party cry.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You say "a party cry." There must be some party to which they cry.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: It is a way in which they put pressure on the Shah.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It means that there must be some section of opinion, to use a Western term, in Persia which does desire some of these things or thinks that it desires some of these things they pretend to desire.

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SIR CHARLES MARLING: There is a very small body of politicians in the towns, particularly Tehran, but the mass of the population would be delighted to see us; the tribesmen, no.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Because we should interfere with their trade?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes, with their brigandage.

MR. MONTAGU: You think that, if left to themselves, they would go to rot?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes.

MR. MONTAGU: What exactly does that mean? How far would they go to rot?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: There would be no kind of security anywhere. The better governors would probably be removed very frequently before they had time to do anything. There would be blackmail on all trade caravans. There is the absolute negation of Government there. The Shah will be constantly changing governors, who will consequently not be capable of doing anything. Such governors do not wish to keep order.

LORD CURZON: Would not the result be a little more serious than universal disorder? Would not it mean in the first place, supposing that the British forces were withdrawn from every quarter, that Bolshevism would invade the country from the north, from Transcaspia, from the Caucasus, and elsewhere, and that, our military line on the Hamadan and the Caspian route being withdrawn, Azerbaijan would at once be re-invaded; the Turkish State, endeavouring to struggle into existence in that direction, would immediately resume its propaganda in Persia, and Persia would be overrun from the north-west? The same as regards the south.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Do you agree to all this, Sir Charles?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Not wholly. I do not think that Bolshevism will come into Persia at all. I do not think that there is any feeling in favour of it.

LORD CURZON: That is not my proposition at all. The only means of keeping it out is if there is some force holding the frontier. One of the reasons why we have kept our forces in Meshed and Transcaspia is because just over the borders there is a collection of the greatest scoundrels unhung in the world. We have the fear that they would press across the border into Persia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You do not think that there is any chance (I am not personally quite convinced that it would be a bad thing) of Bolshevism in Persia?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: No. I do not think that the Bolshevik seed would find any ground on which to grow.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If it came in it would be simply a Russian invasion calling itself Bolshevik?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think that it is incredible that Bolshevism would invade it. It would be a very complicated military proposition after all, even against Persia, to send a great band.

LORD CURZON: To come into Khorassan from Askabad? Fifty men could do it any day. I do not think that the danger lies on that side. I think that the danger lies really on the other side. I would like to hear Sir Charles Marling's reply to the question I raised. Supposing that we withdrew altogether our military position in the North-West districts, what do you think would happen?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Chaos, and more or less peaceful anarchy. I do not think that there would be any serious disturbances.

MR. MONTAGU: Leaving them to themselves has not been tried. Everything else has been tried. This has not.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: There has of late always been a small number of Russian troops in Kasvin; but they have kept very much to themselves. They never did anything in the way of keeping the peace, as far as I know.

MR. MONTAGU: Before our troops were there ——

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SIR CHARLES MARLING: Before our troops were there we had General Baratoff's forces. He had forty thousand men. He was in military occupation to all intents and purposes from Kermanshah to Hamadan and Enzeli.

MR. MONTAGU: Ever since that time there has not been a situation in which the Persians have been left to themselves?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: No.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: When were they last left to themselves?

LORD CURZON: The British have never interfered in the north.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: When did the Russians begin to send any important force into Persia, about?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: About 1910.

LORD CURZON: Earlier than that. It was long before that. When I was in Persia in 1888 the only force of any stability was the Cossacks. They held the capital at their mercy. Russia has held the whole of the North of Persia at her mercy for the last fifty years.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I think that there were no troops ——

LORD CURZON: What about the Persian troops? They had Russian officers. The Russians kept the whole thing going. They were behind the Shah. Our strength was in the South, so far away as to be invisible. The military control of North-west Persia by Russia has lasted for the last fifty years.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The Russian officers there organised this force of seven hundred men, which was supposed to be the Shah's bodyguard. It never left Tehran.

LORD CURZON: They held up the Persian Government.

MR. MONTAGU: Have there been of modern years circumstances in which there were no foreign-speaking troops there?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I should say before 1910.

MR. MONTAGU: What happened before 1910? Were there no foreign troops there?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: In 1910 the Russians sent troops as far as Kasvin.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Was it materially worse then than it is now?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: No, very much better.

LORD CURZON: We are getting into an entirely wrong focus. Why was it better? It has nothing whatever to do with our troops. Our troops were far removed. The reason why there was no disturbance and why misgovernment went on unchecked in Northern Persia was because there was a very powerful military force just across the border. You had Russia threatening at any moment to come in. She could have crossed at any moment she liked. Now there is no such force. You are having set up there on the North-Western border influences of a very dangerous character, and likely to penetrate into Persia and break up the whole country.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Before the Constitution there was a Shah who possessed real authority. Since you have had the Constitution the authority of the Shah has been practically destroyed, and has not been replaced.

MR. MONTAGU: I think that our troops have been provocative. I think that they have caused it and not prevented it. You have argued (and Sir Charles Marling has agreed with you) that if our troops were withdrawn there would be rot, chaos, anarchy, and that no Persian is capable of governing; but he also says that things were better before 1910. Why? Because there did arise in those days one who could keep order, namely, a Shah. Why should not some other Government arise with the power?

LORD CURZON: Sir Charles Marling says that it is impossible. He says that there are no good men in the country. Strong Shahs are not produced more than

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once in a century. Shah Nasr-ed-din, who has been referred to was a very strong man; but since his death there has never been a Shah of real strength. You say, how was it that Persia subsisted in those days? She subsisted because of the Anglo-Russian rivalry. She would have tumbled to pieces in five minutes if she had been left to herself. She was held up by means of that rivalry, and that alone.

MR. MONTAGU: I have often heard it said that a man thinks that he could rule till he has to rule; but I have never heard the converse put.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I want to get Sir Charles Marling's views. I should like to know very much what Sir Charles Marling thinks would be the effect, supposing that we did actually withdraw simply all our troops and cease to pay the Russian Cossacks. What do you think would happen next?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I think that as soon as we withdrew our troops, the Shah would think that he could do exactly as he liked.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What would he do?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: He is extremely badly surrounded. I do not think that it is possible that it could be worse. Every governor who attempts to do anything would be removed. The more corrupt men would be put in. There is a kind of police here and there. Those men would not be paid any longer. That is the only police there is.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What would happen after all that had gone on?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Chaos.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What does that mean? Does that mean that there would be separate governments, or no government there at all?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: No government.

LORD CURZON: Is that a condition you look forward to with equanimity?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What effect would that have on our interests, supposing that there were no government, if you lapsed into chaos? How should we suffer?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Commercially?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I do not think that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company would suffer at all.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The Bakhtiari would keep order there?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes, so long as we are still in Mesopotamia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What other commercial interests of an important kind have we there?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: In the North?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The Imperial Bank, Lynch, Oriental Carpets Manufacturers, and other firms mostly interested in the carpet trade.

LORD CURZON: The Imperial Bank is the only one of real importance, is it not?

MR. OLIPHANT: The trade of Hamadan before the war was worth over a million a year to us.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Apart from the trade interest, what would be the effect politically?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: I do not know what the effect would be on Afghanistan and India. I know but little about those.

LORD CURZON: What is the view of the Government of India about this aspect of the case?

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SIR HAMILTON GRANT: It is a condition that India would not like to see grow, because they have their trade interests on the Indian trade routes. It is a condition they would be sorry to see in an extreme form, though they would be perfectly willing to look on at Persia in a state of anarchy in the tribal areas. We would contemplate the tribal areas of Persia in a state of complete anarchy with equanimity.

LORD CURZON: Do you attach importance in India to the telegraphs?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes. There is one of the main lines to Constantinople and the West.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The cable could carry all that now. The Persian lines are of no value, for those purposes.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Except a local value to our consulates. Our interests, really, as far as the Government of India is concerned, are that we must exclude any other foreign Power from obtaining a dominant position; or, indeed, obtaining a political position at all in Persia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The thing we have to consider is whether it is right or wrong to take up the same kind of attitude as the Americans have taken up with regard to Mexico—allowing Mexico to go into the very greatest disorder and confusion and saying "Nobody is to interfere. We are not going to interfere, and nobody else shall."

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think that we ought to be prepared to interfere to a very small extent at the invitation entirely of the Persian Government, but not to force ourselves on them. I am afraid that the Government of India have been very importunate in the matter. Their view is that unless you can break down this wall of suspicion, distrust, and dislike which was bred in Persia by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, we shall never be able to do anything satisfactorily in Persia. Whether we leave it to stew in its own juice or whether we go in to try to assist it, our ventures will fail because they will meet with a stone-wall opposition at every point, and there will be ebullitions. Until we can regain the confidence of Persia, not of the Persian Government but of the Persian people, by acting openly in accordance with our pledges, and removing the obvious causes of irritation, we shall never be able—whether we get a mandate from the Powers or not—to do anything in Persia satisfactorily, unless we employ overwhelming force. Throughout, the Government of India have been prompted in their recommendations by a desire to regulate our policy in accordance with the military force at our disposal, and, since the war, to avoid involving ourselves in diversions and commitments of an indefinite character, involving very heavy expenditure, which would fall upon the people of India to a considerable extent, and involve us also in the continual possibility of military operations in Persia, which must affect our whole military policy in India, and necessitate the retention of a larger force than we should otherwise retain.

LORD CURZON: What would you do at present?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: At the present moment I should get Percy Cox to take some definite steps towards conciliating the Persian people. The steps I would recommend would be that he should make a pronouncement that it is our intention to remove all our troops from Persia as soon as external circumstances render that possible, that is, as soon as our troubles in the Caucasus and Transcaspia are clear.

LORD CURZON: We have said that in identical terms. We said it when we sent them there.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: A reiteration of that will not do any harm.

LORD CURZON: We always find when we come to these recommendations of what we ought to do, that we have done nearly all of them without any effect, and I expect that you will find that they are things that we have already done. Certainly Mr. Oliphant will bear me out that we said that in those words.

MR. OLIPHANT: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Because I think he and I drew up the phrase together.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I should actually withdraw the troops from Shiraz in anticipation of the complete clearance of the situation, keeping them at Bushire in

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case of accident. Then we have to continue the subsidies to the Persian Government in order to enable them to carry on the ordinary duties of government, and make it public that we are doing so. We should also give them arms. We should definitely abrogate the 1907 agreement instead of merely suspending it, which leads them to suspect the sincerity of our intentions in the matter. I daresay that an endorsement of the Powers at the Peace Conference would be required to enable us to do that.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: How would it help? This is an agreement between Russia and us. How would a pronouncement of the Peace Conference at which Russia was not represented help?

MR. OLIPHANT: The idea was that if the Persian Government raised the matter at the Peace Conference and the Peace Conference were to back our bill, it would more or less ease the minds of the Persians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Our difficulty has been that we cannot abrogate a thing because, having made it with somebody who no longer exists, we have nobody to abrogate it with.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: It falls by itself, does it not?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think that we might have taken that view; but we were very strong in our view as to what was right.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I believe that the revision of the Customs tariff should come under consideration at once. They regard that as very important, do they not?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes. All those matters have been talked about. I do not think that announcements have any effect on them, and I do not think that by those means we shall conciliate Persian public opinion in the least. Persia at present wants to go to the devil its own way. It wants to get rid of all foreign control, and whatever we do, as long as we have any sort of intimate relations or any measure of control or interference with their affairs, they will say, if anything goes wrong, "It is the English."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It seems to me that the discussion is coming to this: either we have to take over Persia altogether and establish something in the nature of protection, or we have to leave it alone. With all respect to Sir Hamilton, I am not quite sure that I do not feel that his policy is too much of a kind of compromise between the two. As long as we go giving the subsidies, and so on, we shall have to have some return of that. We shall have to see how the subsidies are spent. That means definite control. That is a protectorate. I think that we had much better say so. I do not care about the phrase. In substance we should be taking over the control of Persia. We should have to have control of the finances, and control of the armed forces. If you have that you have everything that matters in a country. I am rather against that at present. I am rather inclined to think that it is no use to attempt that until we have allowed them to see what they can do by themselves. If that breaks down they will come to us and ask us for our assistance. But we must say to everybody else, "You are not to go in."

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think that we should have to have the continuance of some of the subsidies and the arms.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should say, "You cannot eat your cake and have it too. If you want to be independent, be independent. We are not going to give you arms or money."

MR. MONTAGU: It seems to me that we are so unpopular with the Persian Government that it is impossible for them to ask us to control. I think that there is something in your suggestion that we should clear out, and show the Persians that they are incapable of managing for themselves, and then reduce them to the position in which they will have to ask us, if we could be quite sure that they will not ask for anybody else in preference to us. If that is so, surely we must get a recognition of our claims above anybody else at the Peace Conference.

LORD CURZON: Sir Charles, do you think, from what you know of the personality of the people who are coming over here that they are at all likely to take the line foreshadowed to me by Nasr-ul-Mulk, acting under instruction of course?

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SIR CHARLES MARLING: They will make extraordinary demands.

LORD CURZON: We have an intimation of the things they want to bring before the Peace Conference. Whether they will get to the Peace Conference or not is not quite certain. I was thinking rather of their *pourparlers* with ourselves. Nasr-ul-Mulk indicated to me that when these people come over, no doubt with the hope that the Peace Conference is going to take up their ideas, and when they find that, whether they come before the Peace Conference or not, the latter will be completely indifferent about these points, and they feel that they are not going to get much out of it, they will then come themselves, to us and say, "We know that we are incapable of standing by ourselves, and we hope that you will consider the question of helping us." You are assuming, Mr. Montagu, that a situation may arise in which the Conference, or the League of Nations will say, "Will you undertake these responsibilities"? I am assuming that the Persians themselves come and ask us to do it.

MR. MONTAGU: In either case, if it is necessary for anybody to be there, I think it must be we. If we are to be there then we must either be there at the invitation of the Peace Conference or at the invitation of the Persians. I think that there is just a chance that sooner or later we may find that it is a case of nobody being there. We can never try the experiment unless we have perfectly safeguarded ourselves, either by the Peace Conference, or by the desire of the Persians, against anybody else.

LORD CURZON: You really mean that we are not to force ourselves upon them.

MR. MONTAGU: Yes.

LORD CURZON: That, I believe, is the common desire of all of us.

MR. MONTAGU: We have been doing it during the war.

LORD CURZON: Yes, under war conditions, and nobody was stronger about that than yourself, and rightly so. We have been driven to it.

MR. MONTAGU: I know that I am going to have more and more difficulty in getting half the cost of the Persian matter out of India. The intelligentsia that does not take much interest in foreign politics does take an interest in finance, and takes an interest in the expenditure of money in Persia, as it is, it is alleged, against the will of the Persians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I really do think that the present position is perfectly intolerable. We are getting nothing out of it really, as far as I can make out. There is at any rate a very strong difference of opinion whether there is any political advantage in our being there. The commercial advantage is very trifling. We are spending immense sums of money. We are incurring, at any rate potentially, great unpopularity in this country. I cannot conceive why we should go on doing it and be frightfully unpopular in Persia at the same time. I cannot see what the object of our present policy is at all. We pay a lot of Russian ruffians, who call themselves officers, who are almost hopelessly hostile to us.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Some of them.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. Sir Charles Marling told me yesterday that, if we tried to make any terms with Starosselski by which Starosselski should definitely come in and work with us, he would certainly be deposed by his other officers, and probably shot.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: It is quite possible.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Could one conceive a more grotesque thing than that we should be finding money for this force, which is really anti-British?

LORD CURZON: That is why I raised that point. If we leave the country altogether and allow it to fall into chaos, it does not really matter what happens in our absence. But suppose that we remain there. What is to be our attitude towards these Russians?

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SIR CHARLES MARLING: I would reduce the Cossack division to say seven or eight hundred men as a bodyguard to the Shah, and make them as attractive as possible.

LORD CURZON: Who is to do it?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: We should have to do it. If we got some sort of reasonable financial control, Persia could pay her way in two years.

LORD CURZON: If Persia is to be left to stew in her own juice, would you still want financial control, or would you clear out absolutely in every respect and leave the country to go to the dogs? That is a tremendous responsibility for any man to take.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: The thing is just to drag along. I should let the Persians have the very small amount of subsidy they are getting now. It is not nearly enough to keep them on their feet.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What do we give them?

MR. OLIPHANT: 120,000*l.* a month.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What is the good of clearing out and letting the country go to ruin?

LORD CURZON: And then paying them while they are going to ruin.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is a million and a half or two millions a year. In addition to that we pay the Rifles, the Cossacks?

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Yes.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What does that come to? I should like to know what Persia costs us quite apart from what they get out of it.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: It costs us a million or more a year. The South Persia Rifles cost a million and a quarter.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I mean all in—military, civilian, and everything. It costs us five or ten millions a year, I suppose.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I understood Sir Charles Marling to say just now that his policy was to leave things to drift. Is not that the reason why we have not done any good in Persia—because we have let things drift? The policy which has been put forward by the War Office here is, first of all, to get rid of Russian control of the Persian Cossacks, and secondly, to get the control of the Persian Cossacks, or the force you put in place of them, in British hands. There was opposition to that at one time, and then we suggested putting it in the hands of the Americans, or somebody of that sort; but that did not meet with any favour. Certainly the policy put forward by the War Office was to get the control of Persia generally, and really get something for our money. We have not had control of Persia. We have put all the Persians against us. We did not want to ride roughshod over the Persians in any way. The War Office suggested a great many times that we should hand over the Persia Rifles, and that we might even get rid of the Indian troops at Shiraz, and that we should start forming the national Persian army which we understood the Persians were so keen about. That is a definite policy—that we should take control in Persia both financially and otherwise.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What will it cost?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: I do not think that it would cost very much more than what we are spending at present.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It would not cost any less?

GENERAL MACDONOGH: No. We do not know now why we are spending money.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I agree with you. It is neither, fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. You may either go away and let the Persians have a try at governing themselves or you may take them over. I do not think, personally, that there is any alternative that is reasonable. I confess that I am a little inclined to think that we ought to go away; but I am not sure.

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LORD CURZON: Have you anything you wish to say, General Cox, from the point of view of the military aspect of the case?

GENERAL COX: I do not think that from the military point of view we could afford to allow Persia to lapse into permanent chaos of any kind, because it is evident that if that is the case somebody will eventually come in if we do not. We must be either in a position to control the chaos from outside, and prevent somebody else coming in, or to prevent the chaos from inside. In our present position in the North we can do both—North and South. It does not matter what the country does inside, we can prevent anybody else coming in to control. But if we leave our Northern control—

LORD ROBERT CECIL: What do you mean by that?

GENERAL COX: On the Caspian, and the Transcaspian railway and Meshed, and withdraw our cordon, no Power in the world can prevent a Northern Power from invading Persia again, and it would happen. Whether it is Russia, or some Power which succeeds Russia in those parts, it would be done. We cannot prevent it. Teheran would be in their hands a long time before it would be in our hands. The capital would be dominated again inevitably if the country is in a state of weakness and chaos.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: That is looking forward a very long way.

GENERAL COX: We give up the power of doing it the moment we retire from the North.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: The suggestion rather is, that if we go away one of two things is likely to happen. You may have simple invertebrate chaos and nothing happens. Either of two things is likely to happen, either that the Government will keep some kind of Government, at any rate no worse than before we began to interfere, or they will get into a hopeless mess, and then the people or somebody else will rise up and say, "We had better have the English back."

LORD CURZON: While we are waiting for the Persians to rise up somebody else will come in from outside.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think, myself, until you get a regular goverament in Russia there is the least prospect; I do not believe much in the possibility of a Bolshevik invasion.

LORD CURZON: We are all agreed that we can say, if we are called upon to assume this rôle in Persia, that we should be most reluctant; but on the other point we rather differ. You are in favour of a policy of chaos, Lord Robert. I look upon chaos as disastrous.

SIR CHARLES MARLING: Are we endeavouring to get control of Persia or not? We have every instrument in our hands to do it. The Persians owe us a great deal of money. We can say to them that we want a financial settlement. We can put very strong pressure upon them. We cannot do it as a mandatory.

LORD CURZON: I do not think that we can carry the case any further to-day. We are much obliged to Sir Charles Marling for coming and giving us his advice.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.* 1,
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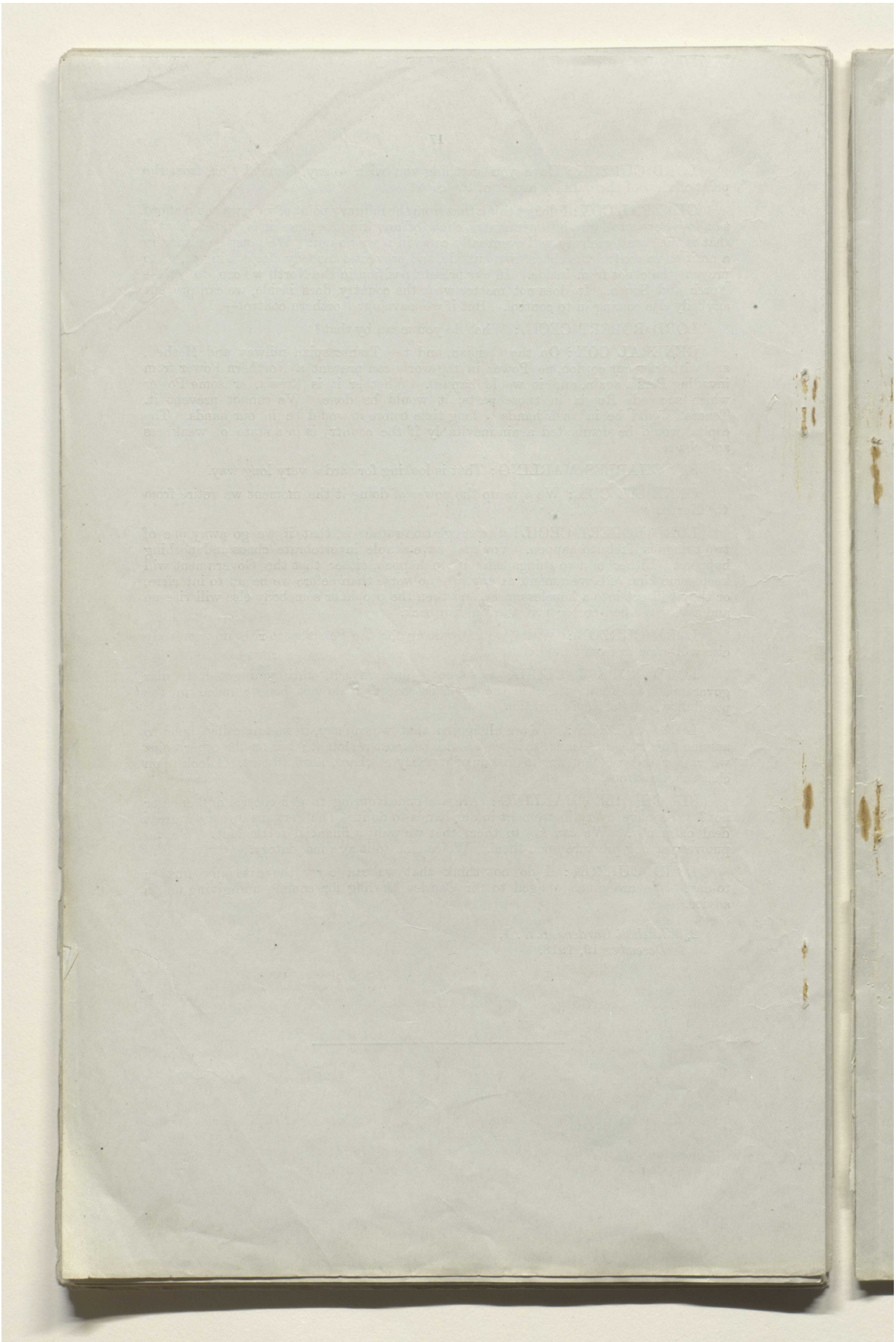

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Lord Curzon (249)

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 46th Minutes.

WAR CABINET.

4

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 23, 1918, at 11·30 A.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended:—

SIR EYRE CROWE, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Foreign Office.

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

The Hon. H. G. NICOLSON, Foreign Office.

SIR A. HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for India.

SIR A. H. GRANT, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

Rear-Admiral G. P. W. HOPE, C.B., Deputy First Sea Lord.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Trans-Caspia: Withdrawal of General Malleson's Force.

1. WITH reference to the 44th Meeting, Minute 5, the Committee had before them a Note by the Secretary of State for India, dated 20th December, 1918, on the Malleson Mission covering a memorandum of the same date by the Military Secretary, India Office (E.C.–2840), copies of which were handed round to members just before the Meeting.

Mr. Montagu said that General Cox's Paper reviewed the history of the Malleson Mission, and the concluding paragraph recommended that the following action should be taken:—

"It is conceivable that it may be very much to our interest in the future to have a Russian State, such as the

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Askabad Government aims at forming, to break the line of Mussulman Government between Azerbaijan and the Indian frontier. It is submitted, therefore, that the present is not a suitable time to withdraw Malleson, and that the Government of India should be told that His Majesty's Government have under consideration the desirability of detaining Malleson's Mission where it is for the present, but without granting further financial assistance to the Askabad Government, at all events until they have given more proofs than they have at present of their stability, and that they be asked to give Malleson's views and their own remarks on the proposal."

Mr. Montagu, proceeding, said that his own difficulty in regard to the Malleson Mission was threefold in character: (*a*) The political situation in this country should make us chary of further military commitments; (*b*) Mr. Keynes, the Treasury representative, had always informed the Committee that no more money was available for the continuance of the financial support which had hitherto been given to the Askabad Government; (*c*) the general tenor of Malleson's telegrams was unsatisfactory, inasmuch as he complained of feeling that he had not the support of His Majesty's Government behind him, and, further, that he could not count on military or financial support. Mr. Montagu said that he naturally objected to leaving General Malleson in his present position so long as the latter felt that he had not the British Government behind him. On the other hand, General Cox's Paper argued very ably that Malleson must remain for the present. Mr. Montagu reminded the Committee that, at their meeting on the 5th December (E.C.–41st Meeting, Minute 4), the Committee had decided that the India Office should inform the Government of India that His Majesty's Government were prepared to provide at once for General Malleson's immediate necessities the equivalent to 100,000*l.* sterling to be paid in krans at Meshed; but that this promise of financial support was intended to meet immediate necessities, and must not be regarded as indicating that further support would be forthcoming. He would suggest that a telegram should be sent to the Indian Government, saying that the Cabinet were now considering General Malleson's position, and that they were desirous of withdrawing him, but they felt that he must remain where he was for the present until the Austro-German prisoners had been evacuated from Transcaspia and Russian Turkestan.

Sir Hamilton Grant said that he thought that the Indian Government would be quite prepared to accept the proposal of withdrawing General Malleson as soon as the Austro-German prisoners had been got rid of. From the very first the Indian Government had deprecated the despatch of this mission, as they disliked the whole undertaking. General Malleson had shown a disposition to penetrate further than was considered advisable, and it had consequently been necessary to issue instructions to him that he was not to move beyond Merv. As soon as wider considerations would admit, the Indian Government, he felt sure, would be glad if General Malleson's Mission could be recalled. (General Cox's Memorandum, paragraph 10.)

General Thwaites said that under General Malleson there were at present some 1,400 men echeloned between Askabad and Merv. The reason why Malleson was anxious to proceed beyond Merv was his desire to secure the crossings of the Oxus.

General Macdonogh said that the suggestion to despatch the mission into Trans-Caspia originated with the War Office. There was no doubt that, since the mission had crossed into Trans-Caspia, there had been a very great improvement in regard to the information we had received in respect of what was taking place in that region. He suggested that the British Government should bring pressure to bear upon Austria and Germany to get back the prisoners

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of their respective nationalities, especially the Magyars, who were a source of considerable trouble and embarrassment.

The Chairman said that the evacuation of the prisoners was mainly a question of shipping. He had seen in the course of the last day or so a telegram to the effect that they would be evacuated as soon as General Thomson could arrange at Baku for their disposal and return to their own countries.

The Committee decided—

To authorise the Secretary of State for India to send a telegram to the Indian Government in the sense proposed by Mr. Montagu, and on the lines suggested in the concluding paragraph of General Cox's Memorandum.

Middle and Near Eastern Questions: Constantinople.

2. With reference to Eastern Committee 44th Meeting, Minute 1, the Committee had before them the following papers on the subject of the future of Constantinople :—

"Turkey in Europe." Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe (E.C.–2822). Memorandum by the Admiralty (E.C.–2823).
"Strategic Importance of Constantinople." Memorandum by the General Staff (E.C.–2824).

The Chairman said that unfortunately most of the papers before the Committee had only been received in time to be circulated just before the Committee met. A further paper (E.C.–2841), emanating from the India Office, comprising a memorandum by Sir H. Grant, with a covering note by Sir A. Hirtzel, had not been circulated, and he himself had only received a copy just before the Committee assembled. He proposed, therefore, to make an opening statement, as a basis of discussion, briefly summarising the contents of the various papers and the policies they severally recommended. There were certain axiomatic propositions which he would submit to the Committee, and which he thought were indisputable, and would meet with general acceptance; and he would then indicate the general lines of the policy which he himself would be inclined to recommend His Majesty's Government to adopt.

A general discussion followed the Chairman's statement. No decisions were recorded, but at the request of Mr. Balfour the Chairman undertook to summarize, for circulation to members of the Committee and for use by the British delegates at the Peace Conference, the various arguments that had been advanced at the meeting for and against the different lines of policy that it was possible to adopt.*

(A verbatim record of the Chairman's statement and of the subsequent discussion is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.)

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
December 23, 1918.

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* *Note by the Secretary.*—Lord Curzon's summary subsequently appeared in the form of a Memorandum, entitled, "The Future of Constantinople," and dated the 2nd January, 1919 (War Cabinet Paper P.–85), which was circulated to the Imperial War Cabinet and Eastern Committee.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 23, 1918, at 11·30 a.m.

THE FUTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

LORD CURZON: The Committee has had circulated to it papers which, I am afraid, everybody has not had time to read, from the Foreign Office, written by Sir Eyre Crowe,* from the War Office,† and from the Admiralty,‡ and two papers§ placed in our hands this morning from the India Office and the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India.‖ Perhaps it may help matters a little, and place our discussion in the proper focus, if, having read all these papers rather carefully, I preface our discussion by a brief statement on the lines of the statements that I have made here before.

We may start, I think, by two axiomatic propositions which nobody will be concerned to dispute. The first of these is the enormous strategical and political importance given to the Power that holds Constantinople. That is demonstrated by the historical argument in the paper of the General Staff; and one need only refer in a sentence to the two or three occasions in the past on which the possession of Constantinople has deflected the entire history of the world.

The first was when the Roman Empire moved to Byzantium, with its incalculable results on the fate not only of the Roman Empire, but of the whole Eastern world. The second was when the Turks, crossing the Bosphorus and establishing themselves in Constantinople, practically altered the history of mankind for the next five centuries. The third was the prodigious effect that has been exercised upon our own policy by the presence of the Turks in Constantinople, which was really the basis of the entire old Eastern policy of Great Britain. It was, in the main, because the Turk was at Constantinople that we fought the Crimean War. It was for the same reason that we interfered to tear up the Treaty of San Stefano. Indeed, up to the last twenty years, when Lord Salisbury first hazarded a doubt as to whether we had not put our money on the wrong horse, the whole orientation of our Eastern policy has been determined by the position of the Indian Empire at one end, and the position of the Turk astride of the Straits at the other.

I need not waste more time upon that.

The second axiomatic proposition is that the presence of the Turks in Europe has been a source of unmitigated evil to everybody concerned. I am not aware of a single interest, Turkish or otherwise, that during nearly 500 years has benefited by that presence. They have introduced a most distracting and demoralising influence into European politics. Their presence has, I think, been equally injurious to Islamism because of the pretensions and aspirations it has encouraged. It has been absolutely disastrous to the various subject races, both in Europe and in Asia, with whom they have had to deal. Indeed, the record is one of misrule, oppression, intrigue, and massacre, almost unparalleled in the history of the Eastern world.

Finally, the possession of the Straits has enabled the Turks, if we take only the case of this war, to exercise an influence altogether disproportionate to any position that they would otherwise occupy in the world. It was their presence in Constantinople and the fortification of the Straits that prevented Russia from obtaining an exit into the Mediterranean, that brought in the Balkan States in the earlier days of the war, that was responsible for our unfortunate failure—conceived on the soundest strategical lines as that venture was—at Gallipoli and the Dardanelles; and really the last four years are a convincing proof of the prodigious influence that the possession of the Straits and Constantinople enables the Power placed in that position to exercise, perhaps even more than before, under the conditions of modern warfare.

What are the factors we now have to deal with? We are discussing to-day what ought to be the fate of the territories of the Turk in Europe, of Constantinople and the area around it.

The population of Turkey in Europe at the beginning of the war was under two millions. I fancy, from such information as I have been enabled to procure, that it is not much more than a million and a half now. Contrast with this the population of Turkey in Asia. Take Asia Minor. I am giving the pre-war figures. No doubt they

* E.C.–2822. † E.C.–2824. ‡ E.C.–2823. § E.C.–2841.

‖ *Note by the Secretary.*—A Memorandum by Sir Louis Mallet, entitled, "Constantinople and Internationalization," was prepared and circulated to members of the Committee subsequent to the meeting (E.C.–2964).

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are much reduced by the sufferings due to the war. The population of Asia Minor was ten millions, of Armenia and Kurdistan two and a half millions, of Mesopotamia two millions, of Syria three and a half millions, of Arabia one million. If we add together the whole of the last-named groups which are going to be taken from Turkey in any case, and which amount to nine millions, we leave in Asia Minor a population of ten millions for the Turk, as compared with the less than two millions that are still under his rule in Europe.

MR. BALFOUR: By "Turks" you mean Turkish subjects; you do not exclude Greeks?

LORD CURZON: I am including everybody for the moment. The exact proportions of the Greeks, Turks, Armenians, &c., in the whole area it is difficult to determine. When we come to Constantinople it is easier to determine the exact proportions. Constantinople, at the beginning of the war, was believed to have nearly one million of people. At the present moment I expect it has decidedly less than three quarters of a million. However, the actual total is immaterial. The proportions are important. From a comparison of the various tables of statistics that I have been able to refer to, I fancy that the following is about the truth, and it is very material in helping us to arrive at a decision. Out of every hundred people in Constantinople approximately forty are Turks, twenty are Greeks, nineteen are Armenians, fourteen are Jews and other foreigners, and the balance is made up by a floating residuum. Thus, you see, even in Constantinople itself, contrary to the belief, I believe, entertained by most people in this country, perhaps by some of us at this table, the Turks are not a majority of the population.

Those are the factors as regards population with which we have to deal.

To what extent are we committed with regard to Constantinople by anything that has been said by us or by our Allies during the war?

In the earlier days of the war, in March 1915, Mr. Asquith's Government entered into an engagement with the Russian Government, if the war was successful, to hand over to Russia not only Constantinople but a substantial strip of territory on both sides of the Straits. This strip of territory subtended not only the Bosphorus, but the Sea of Marmora and the Dardanelles, and it would have placed Russia not only in possession of the city itself, but of the whole of the approaches to and the exits therefrom. It is unnecessary for us to discuss here the wisdom or the policy of that act. I profoundly deplored it at the time, because I regarded it as fraught with great danger to the common cause, and even to Russia herself, who, I think, would have suffered irremediably had she been persuaded to come down from the North and embark on the wholly different sphere of politics which the possession of Byzantium would have opened out before her. That is, however, only a dictum of my own. Russia has disappeared from the scene, the arrangement has lapsed, and we need not spend more of our time in considering it.

The second stage was when, in January 1917, we drew up, in conference with our Allies in Downing Street, the famous declaration of our aims in reply to the American note. I forget the exact terms employed; but we did distinctly include in that statement the expulsion of the Turk from Europe. Slight apparent modifications of that attitude have been visible since. Our Prime Minister, in a speech which he made in January of the present year, used this language. He said that Great Britain did not challenge the maintenance of Turkey or of the Turks in the homeland of the Turkish race with its capital at Constantinople. Asia Minor is not the homeland of the Ottoman Turks. But without debating that point, still less is Turkey in Europe their homeland, and therefore when he spoke of the homeland with its capital, if he meant that the capital was in any way connected with the homeland, of course he was saying what was historically and ethnically inaccurate. What exactly he meant by his statement I do not recollect. I think that it was made at a moment when we were hoping to persuade the Turk to give in, and it was considered desirable to say something somewhat reassuring to him.

A little later, in fact only a month or so ago, Lord Robert Cecil (he will correct me if I am wrong) made a statement in the House of Commons, in which the words, as I have them here, were as follows. He said "A great deal is to be said for the ejection of the Turk from Constantinople; but do not forget that Constantinople is a predominantly Turkish capital."

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes.

LORD CURZON: Just before you came into the room I ventured to point out to the Committee that that was inaccurate, because, so far from it being a predominantly

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Turkish capital, only 40 per cent. of the population are Turks themselves. Still they have nearly one-half.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And of course they are very much larger than any other single element.

LORD CURZON: Yes; but they are only about equal to the Greeks and the Armenians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is right.

LORD CURZON: And be it remembered that out of the population of Constantinople a large number, supposing that the Government were moved, would drift over to Asia with the Turks, because of the officials and their families who have collected there and battened upon the place for years, but who have no necessary connection with Constantinople itself.

I do not think, however, that in anything that has been said here there have been words which commit us irretrievably upon the matter, and even if they committed us they would not commit our Allies, and I imagine that Mr. Balfour would agree that at the Allied Conference when it meets at Paris we have really a perfectly free hand with our Allies to discuss the fate of Constantinople and to make such dispositions as the Congress of Europe may decide upon.

MR. MONTAGU: There is another quotation from the Prime Minister's speech. Will you give us that? It is quoted in Sir Eyre Crowe's paper. "We are not fighting to deprive Turkey of its capital."

LORD CURZON: I think that it is the same speech that I was referring to.

There seems to be presented to us, accordingly, if the Powers decide to take it, one of the great opportunities that have arisen in the history of the world. Assuming what I have said about the pernicious influence which has been exercised by the Turkish presence in Constantinople to be true, here at last is an occasion when it might be possible—I do not argue for the moment whether it is desirable—to cut out this canker which has poisoned the life of Europe. I expect that if we could look to the opinion of the civilised countries through the world they would be bitterly disappointed if, for reasons of political expediency or otherwise, the opportunity was not taken at any rate to consider most seriously the question of getting rid of this running sore for ever.

What are the solutions which are possible, which are open to us to consider? Upon certain points, I gather from the papers and indeed from the discussions in the press, everybody is agreed. Whether you keep the Turk there or whether you turn him out, there must be some kind of international guarantee for the future system that is to be set up at Constantinople and the surrounding territory. Secondly, the waterways—and by that I mean the Dardanelles, the Marmora, and the Bosphorus—must be absolutely free both for the merchant shipping and for the ships of war of all the Powers of all the world. Thirdly, the forts by which those narrow passages are defended must either be disarmed or razed to the ground. I believe those to be initial propositions upon which everybody is agreed.

Then we come to the much more difficult question, to whom is the government or control of this area to be given? I am assuming for the moment—I shall have to revert to this later—that the Turkish Government disappears from the scene and that some other Government is put into its place.

The ground may, at this stage, I think, be very quickly cleared. It must be obvious, I think, to everybody, that the custodian or the trustee cannot be one of the smaller or weaker Powers of Europe. Whatever claim Bulgaria may have had at any time at the commencement of the first Balkan war, when she seemed to be striding rapidly in the direction of Constantinople, and people talked about the Cross being placed again on the cupola of St. Sophia, and Bulgaria's secular ambitions seemed to have some chance of realisation, all that has now disappeared, and the treachery and the crimes of the Bulgarian people and Government during this war have effectively removed any chance that Bulgaria might have, quite apart from the fact that no other Balkan State would be willing to admit her.

The second small State that must be eliminated is Greece. We shall have difficulty enough in settling the home borders of Greece in her relations with her neighbours, without contemplating for a moment such a vast experiment as handing over to her the fate of Constantinople. Her own position, even if it were given to her, is not strong enough to enable her to hold it, at any rate, beyond quite a small length

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of time. Her own shores would be separated from those of Constantinople, and as the War Office* has pointed out, in any struggle in the future those responsible for her existence would have of necessity the very onerous responsibility of defending the shores of Greece in different parts of the Mediterannean that are particularly difficult to protect. I think that we shall all agree, for other reasons as well, that I need not enter into here that Greece cannot be considered. No other small Power is worthy of a moment's attention.

Our next question is, Can it be a great European Power? Here we can proceed just as quickly by the method of exhaustion. Russia has forfeited her claim, and had disappeared from the scene. As to France and Italy, neither would agree for a moment to the appointment of the other; nor should we, I imagine, agree to either ourselves. I think that they must be wiped off the slate. I hope that the Committee do not think that I am dealing in a dogmatic or arbitrary way with this problem. I am merely trying by the brevity of my conclusions to save time. One could argue the case of Russia, or France, or Italy for ten minutes each.

The remaining great Power which is possible is Great Britain. I dare say that most of us, at the bottom of our hearts, think that Great Britain is the best qualified for the task, and could undertake it with the greatest advantage to the people themselves. A telegram came in only yesterday from Constantinople indicating that offers of that sort are not unlikely to be made to us by the Turks themselves. But I assume that we should agree that it is absolutely out of the question that we, with our vast burden, should—even if we were invited to do so either by the Turks themselves or by the League of Nations—assume the further responsibility of the future of Constantinople. If any opinions are entertained to the contrary, we could perfectly well argue it at this table; but I do not argue it now, because I assume it to be out of the question.

The smaller Powers and the greater Powers having thus been hypothetically eliminated, there remain two or three other alternatives.

One is that of a condominium, the policy that whenever mentioned is only mentioned to be rejected, but that sometimes has to be adopted as a *pis-aller* because no other can be found. International boards do exist for the control of the navigation of the Danube and other rivers. They have been tried in other parts of the world. The other day when we were talking about the Caucasus, as we explored the different possibilities of military occupation—British, French, and otherwise—it was Lord Robert Cecil, I think, who said: "Well, after all, we may have to come back to the idea of an international force," which we had all rejected. Therefore I suppose that it is not impossible, perhaps it is not unlikely, that in the case of Constantinople, if every Power—great or small—is rejected one after the other, some kind of international constitution may have to be set up in order to rule as well as it could (I am afraid that it would be very badly) the city and the adjacent areas. But I feel that it is quite unnecessary to explore that solution, because it is one, I imagine, to which the Powers would only be driven in the last resort.

The last suggestion is America, and from the evidence that has been put before us here we know, first, that America has been, through her missions and otherwise, warmly interested in Constantinople for a long time; and, secondly, that there exists a strong party in Constantinople, I believe the C.U.P. and their followers, who, largely for reasons of a selfish nature, are anxious to bring America in and make her the mandatory Power. I should say in passing that I think that they are much more concerned in doing that in order to save their own skins and to preserve the simulacrum of Turkish rule and authority in Europe than they are from any regard either for the interests of their own populations or from any sympathy with reform in the future. But let that pass. There is or there may be a decided movement to bring the Americans in. Whether America would accept the responsibility I do not know. In all our discussions during the past few weeks we have been proceeding upon the hypothesis that, having done so much to promote the scheme of a League of Nations, America will be almost bound, in honour as well as in logic, to take her share in bearing the responsibility. Whether that will carry her so far as to assume an obligation of this sort is a question on which I have always had very grave doubt myself, but which no doubt we shall see resolved in the course of the next few weeks. I do not therefore attempt to discuss the question whether America would be likely to accept the charge if it were offered to her.

An entirely different point is raised by the attitude of our naval authorities here, who think that the position of the Americans in any important post

* E.C.–2824.

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in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean would be a source of naval danger to this country. They feel that, whatever arrangements were made in advance, whatever restrictions were imposed as regards military or naval strength, sooner or later America would acquire a navy, and that having acquired a navy she would require a naval base and naval stations, and so on, and that we should be admitting to European politics a new balance of naval power in Europe, a disturbing and possibly, in the long run, a maleficent influence. I can give no opinion on that. My opinion is worthless. I confess that I do not fully understand it. I do not understand why, if America were to assume such a responsibility as we are now discussing in Constantinople, or even Palestine or elsewhere, she must necessarily have a big fleet for the purpose, must necessarily have a naval base, and must necessarily embark upon a policy of competition with ourselves. The naval authorities no doubt will develop that point of view. I only, in passing, venture to say on my own account that I do not fully understand or appreciate the scale of the danger which they seem to put so high themselves.

These are the various candidates that have been named. Before we go further, it seems to me we have to consider, whoever is to be at Constantinople, the exact relations in which, be it America or be it a condominium, they are to be placed to the people themselves. Do you contemplate placing this power in Constantinople and leaving the Turks there? Do you contemplate leaving the Turkish population and eliminating the Turkish Government? Or do you contemplate leaving some form of Turkish government in Constantinople side by side with the mandatory Power that is exercising police functions in Constantinople and over the Straits? That really raises very big issues in international policy.

Those who feel very strongly that the opportunity ought not to be lost of getting rid of the Turk base their arguments upon what seem to me to be very powerful grounds indeed. They say that it is the presence of the Turks in Constantinople that during all these centuries has given the world the impression that Turkey is one of the great Powers of the world. Certainly their presence there has enabled Turkey to pose as a great European Power, and these pretensions would absolutely disappear if she were turned out of Turkey and removed to the other side of the Straits. Secondly, I imagine that her presence in Europe must have had an enormous effect in augmenting the prestige and power of Islam throughout the world, and in giving encouragement to the creed of Pan-Islam, about which we have heard so much in recent times.

Another point that the advocates of the expulsion of the Turk lay great stress upon—and it appeals to me very strongly—is this. Just as Byzantium in the old days of the Eastern Roman Empire was a sink of corruption and iniquity unparalleled in the ancient world, so undoubtedly is Constantinople to-day. Stambul in the hands of the Turks has been not only the hotbed of every sort of Eastern vice, but it has been the source from which the poison of corruption and intrigue has spread far and wide into Europe itself. The presence of the Turks at Constantinople has been an ulcer in the side of Europe. If we could get rid of them, if we could agree on the "bag and baggage" policy of Mr. Gladstone and remove them to the other side, we should all feel that a kind of miasma had disappeared from the atmosphere of Europe. Further, their removal would immensely encourage the progress of the Balkan communities to the bigger future that lies before them. If, on the other hand, Turkey remains in any capacity you will always feel that in the background the old system is struggling again into existence, the kind of thing that Abdul Hamid brought to perfection in the course of his long and bloodstained career, and which there is now a glorious opportunity of getting rid of for ever.

It is also to be remembered that if she goes it would probably be the very best thing that could happen to herself and to her own people. Those who know the Turk in his own highlands in Asia Minor and elsewhere always speak of him with respect as a simple-minded, worthy fellow, who dislikes as much as anybody else the system of corruption and intrigue that goes on at headquarters, who would much prefer living his own simple existence detached from Europe and all governing influences altogether.

Further, it is to be borne in mind that if Turkey were turned out of Europe she would lose the temptation to spend the enormous sums she has had to squander on maintaining an army and a navy, at any rate an army, to sustain the illusion that she is a great Power.

Lastly (this brings me rather into collision with the views that are put forward by Sir Hamilton Grant, of the Government of India), if the Turk were turned out of Europe it would settle, to my mind for all time, the question of the Khalifate. How has the Ottoman Sultan been able through all these centuries to hold the position of

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Khalif? As is well known he is not of the Koreish family, and from the point of view of descent his claim to the spiritual supremacy is widely disputed in the Moslem world. He has been enabled to keep it, in the main, for two reasons: First, because he has been the custodian of the Holy Places, and secondly, because he has had Constantinople. The first has given him great spiritual distinction and authority over the Moslems all over the world. The second has enabled him to pose as the great Islamic Power. He has already lost the Holy Places. If he also loses Constantinople, it seems to me his chances of retaining the Khalifate are gone. What they may be if he remains there I do not know. I should think that they are doubtful. If he loses Constantinople I imagine that there can be very little doubt that the Mahommedan world will not accept as a Khalif a sovereign who has been dispossessed of Constantinople, Mecca, and Medina, and who has been driven back into the highlands of Asia.

I have stated what seem to be the reasons for getting rid of the Turk from Europe altogether. Now let us consider the reasons against.

First, we are told that it would outrage Mahommedan sentiment throughout the world. I very much wonder if that would be the case myself. This war has applied a wonderful test-stone to the solidarity of Islam, and as the various Powers who have been fighting the Turk, and so many of whom have large Turkish possessions of their own, whether they be in Africa or in Asia, successively came into the struggle, each was oppressed with the fear that all his Mahommedan subjects would dislike the fact that we were fighting the Turks so much that trouble and revolution might break out, and, in fact, that the Moslem world as a whole would be outraged at the idea of our being at war with the Turk. So far as I know those expectations have been falsified. When we come to India, about which Sir Hamilton Grant has put in a very powerful plea as to the feelings of the Indian Mahommedans and their great sense of outrage and indignity if the Turks were turned out of Constantinople, with all respect I do not agree the least in the world. I believe that the Moslem sentiment about Constantinople is one of purely modern creation. I do not believe that it existed fifty years ago.

It was largely the fuss we ourselves made about Turkey at the time of the Crimean War, and the fact that our policy was so much identified with that of Turkey, that first induced the Mahommedans of India to begin to look towards Constantinople, and to regard the Sultan as their spiritual chief. I was in India when the Turks were at war with Greece, and all sorts of apprehensions were expressed as to the possible attitude of the Moslems in India. They did not turn a hair. In the same way when the first and second Balkan wars took place, and Turkey was gradually being driven back, and Constantinople was at one time in danger. I do not say that anxiety was not expressed in India, but nothing serious took place. In this war, again, where the strain has been immeasurably greater upon Moslem sentiment than it ever has been before, is it not a most startling and remarkable fact that the Moslems of India have accepted the position with the loyalty and equanimity they have? If Sir Hamilton Grant refers, as he may do, to more recent manifestations, I would reply to him that the Nationalist Moslem movement in India is much more concerned in sympathising with the Young Turk because the Young Turk is anti-British than because he is a Moslem.

It is some years since I left India, and I speak with some diffidence on the matter. If I were asked, however, to give my opinion for what it is worth as to whether, if the Turk were turned out of Constantinople, there would be a great revulsion of feeling or any serious excitement in India, I should answer decidedly in the negative. I do not think that Pan-Islamism has any substantial hold in India at all.

Now, coming to the end, what I have said would indicate that, in my judgment, for what it is worth, the arguments in favour of seizing this opportunity of getting rid of the Turk altogether from Europe are predominant. That still leaves unsolved the question of whether there is to be a condominium, or whether we ought to have the Americans. Perhaps the authorities here, who are much better qualified than I am, would tell me what are the kinds of limitations that could be placed upon their exercise of authority. Would it be possible, if you put the Americans there (I am assuming that the Turks have gone), to place them there with a sort of municipal administration of Constantinople, with a force that would enable them to police the city and such surrounding districts as were left, with such naval force, again, as would enable them to patrol the waters of the Straits, with no fear of their thus creating a considerable force—in fact, to allow or invite the Americans simply to discharge the functions of preserving law and order, and conducting local administration within that area? I cannot myself see that that need necessarily be impossible; but it is not accepted in any of the papers, and therefore I venture merely to suggest the idea.

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There is the last suggestion of all, which is strongly favoured by the War Office in their paper, and which also, I gather, is the view of the Government of India, and that is to leave the Turk alone, internationalise the Straits, knock down the forts, leave the Sultan, leave the Seraglio, leave the Sublime Porte, leave all the venerable relics of the last five hundred years in Constantinople, deprive him of all real military power, and assume that, chastened by disaster and incapacitated by weakness, he will be a relatively respectable man in the future. That is a solution which the War Office recommend, and which, on grounds partly political and partly sentimental, a good many others favour. I confess that I am entirely against it. I do not believe in the regeneration of the Turk under any circumstances whatsoever. I think that once you leave the Turk in Europe as a governing force he will go on doing exactly the same as before. There will be a revival of the old intrigues, and he will presently begin his old game again of trying to set the Powers at loggerheads with each other and profiting by their squabbles.

Therefore, so far as I am competent to give an opinion, I am in favour of the clean cut; but in what I have said I have been more concerned with trying to do justice to the various views put forward than I have been to urge any individual opinions of my own.

MR. MONTAGU: I feel very strong dissent from your conclusion, and therefore perhaps you would not mind me, in a few words, stating the reasons of that dissent, because it seems to me that before we discuss who shall be the mandatory Power there, the first thing to decide is whether the Committee agrees with your very powerful argument for turning the Turk out, bag and baggage, or could be induced to agree with the argument I am going to put forward. The view of the military authorities and of the Admiralty is that the Turk should be left where he is. I would point out you did not seem enamoured of any of the resultant plans with which you dealt on the exclusion of the Turk. You "hypothetically" eliminated him, and the greater Powers and the smaller Powers, and you were then left either with a condominium, which you disliked, or with the United States, which the Admiralty dislikes, and which in our discussions at the Cabinet it was very clear that some of our colleagues very much disliked. I would suggest that, if there was no better reason, the fact that you cannot find a Power that you really like to replace the Turk would lead one to hesitate to remove the Turk in order to embark upon a scheme which may not be any more satisfactory than the Turk himself. I assume that we are all agreed on the internationalisation and the neutralisation of the Straits and Marmora. What are the reasons that you allege most strongly for removing the Turk? First of all you said that it was not the homeland of the Turk, and that the Prime Minister had been historically inaccurate in using that phrase. I think that it is the homeland of the Turk. The fact that he has only gone there to live of comparatively recent years does not prevent its being his home. You would be depriving the Turk of that country which is now his main home and of his capital at a time when you are depriving him of very large portions of his territory in Asia.

Is it not fair to state that many of the abuses, due to the existence of the Turk in Constantinople, are due to his control over the Straits, and to his rule of such countries as Armenia, which you are going to deprive him of? Is it not possible that Turkish rule in Constantinople would be much less intolerable when these great powers were removed from him?

I look at this much more from the point of view of the Indian Mahommedan. I would like to say a few words in amplification of what Sir Hamilton Grant has written on that subject. Do let us remember that, whether you could have conquered the Turk without the Indian Mahommedan or not, it was the Indian Mahommedan that conquered him. It is open to argument (it certainly has been argued in some of the more scurrilous Indian newspapers) that you failed to conquer the Turk when you did not use any large number of Indian troops, but that you did conquer him when Indian troops took up the burden of the work in Mesopotamia and in Palestine.

LORD CURZON: You say that we conquered him by the aid of the Mahommedan troops. Is that borne out by the figures? If you take the Indian forces fighting the Turk in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and elsewhere, do you mean to tell me that the larger proportion were Mahommedans?

MR. MONTAGU: The best of them would be Punjab Mahommedans. With the Indian Mahommedan the Turk was conquered. The best province for recruiting purposes during the war was the Punjab, which is wholly Mahommedan.

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LORD CURZON : I think you are stating your case much too high. In a good many places we had to be careful about employing Mahommedans. Difficulties arose in Gallipoli, and difficulties arose in Mesopotamia. I would like to put in a caveat against accepting the proposition that we defeated the Turk by means of Mahommedans of India. They lent valuable assistance ; but it was no more. The bulk of the fighting was done by non-Mahommedan races. That is my belief.

MR. MONTAGU : I base my argument upon the magnificent recruiting work ; the staple part of the Indian army came from the Punjab, and was mainly Mahommedan. I quite agree that there was trouble in the earlier stages of the war with certain regiments because they were fighting the Turks, which shows that, despite the fact that they loyally assisted us in our war against the Turk, there was a terrific strain upon their loyalty. I view with horror the argument that because continuous strains have been put upon the loyalty of the Mahommedans, which they have magnificently withstood, therefore you are not to consider their views in the settlement of this question. The argument that people have threatened rebellion and outbreak if certain things were done which might put a strain upon the Mahommedan loyalty, but that that prophecy has not been fulfilled, is all the more reason why we should consider Mahommedan feeling. It is not really Constantinople that I am afraid of. It is the idea that this country has become an anti-Mahommedan State, which has led all through the Balkan wars, which you referred to, to the gradual downing of Mahommedanism and driving it eastward—the war of the Italians in Tripoli and the Balkan war. I was in India at the time, or just afterwards, and I remember the tremendous grief with which certain speeches of Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Winston Churchill were commented upon by the Indian newspapers as showing that this country was anti-Mahommedan. When you come to talk about the Khalifate and the extreme unlikeliness of the Sultan of Turkey remaining Khalif if he is turned out of Constantinople, I would say with great respect that we have solemnly declared that we are not going to interfere in any way with the free choice of Khalif, and therefore I do not think that we ought, even in privacy, to allow that argument to affect the decision in the least. We ought to stick to our declaration that we still express no opinion, whoever the Mahommedans choose to elect as their Khalif.

LORD CURZON : That does not prevent us from forecasting the possible consequences.

MR. MONTAGU : The last thing that I would say is this. If you remember, when His Majesty went to address Parliament and the representatives of the Dominions in the House of Lords, he referred to the rescue of Palestine for Christianity. There were several comments upon that at the time. We had used Mahommedan troops.

MR. BALFOUR : It was only the guardianship of the Holy Places, surely ?

MR. MONTAGU : No, the question of Palestine.

MR. BALFOUR : No. I heard the speech. I am sure that I should have stood up with horror if I had understood that it was to be conquered from Arabs, and from Jews, and from Turks in order to turn it into a Christian country. I do not believe that that was ever suggested.

MR. MONTAGU : I cannot find it at the moment because I have not got it, but I am sure that my memory is accurate on the subject because it gave rise to so many representations to me, and it seemed to me to show how careful we ought to be.

Finally, I would remind you of this, the Prime Minister has appointed two representatives of India to take their share in the Imperial deliberations on Peace. By an accident it so happens that both these gentlemen are Hindus, and there is no Mahommedan representation directly accessible to me, and therefore it seemed to me that it behoves us to be all the more careful that Mahommedan interests are not forgotten. It does seem to me that Lord Curzon has shown us satisfactorily that there is no good solution by driving out the Turk, and that we are in a position to consider Mahommedan feeling which is so loyal and which is likely to remain loyal, and we have every reason to consider it in the solution.

MR. BALFOUR : I have no doubt that the question is one of extreme difficulty. As regards the particular objection raised by Mr. Montagu, I am not at all qualified to speak. I have no knowledge of Mahommedan sentiment in India, and it would be folly for me to offer an opinion on the subject. But I would like to make this observation.

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Mr. Montagu seems to think that the process of driving the Turk eastward is on the whole rather fatal to British prestige in India; but the process of driving the Turk eastward is one which has been going on rapidly really for two centuries at least—more, I think. The Turk, as we all know, once occupied Hungary, Roumania, Serbia, and went up to the gates of Vienna. He had all the North of Africa, the islands of Greece, the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean. The whole process of history in that part of the world has been to steadily drive him back. If anybody would look at the map of the Turkish Empire as it was, let us say—I will take it at random—in 1650, and a map of what it is at the present time, he would have ocular demonstration of the fact. The question is, therefore, ought this process to be stopped at this last and critical stage? Ought not, in other words, an Oriental race go back to an Oriental country, and can we not quite truly say to the Mahommedan world, "We have no objection to Mahommedanism, but we do not think that Europe is the place for it?" However, it really turns upon this. That argument turns upon a knowledge of Indian feeling, about which I am a very poor authority. I believe, however, that it is true that you could leave the Turk in Europe and could leave him in possession of Constantinople, and yet preserve the waterways of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, and I do not think that it would require very large powers to do so, or any great force or any great cost of money. It would be under international guarantees. An authority rather in the nature perhaps of the Danube authority would have a certain police force. There would be no forts, there would be no fleet, there would be no means of taking the place by a *coup de main*, which would have the least chance of success, by the Turks. I do not think that the operation of keeping these waterways open is either very costly or very difficult, or in any way impracticable. That would leave the Turk with his powers at Constantinople somewhat shorn. It would leave the Sultan living there, if he chose to live there, with a control over the Christian populations of Turkey in Arabia. I personally am not, therefore, moved with the argument that it is a difficult thing to carry out, and I am not very much moved by the argument that it is a good thing to keep the Turk in Europe. My own views are that I should like to see him expelled, and I think this is a proper opportunity for expelling him; but I am not quite sure that anybody listening to Lord Curzon's able statement of the case would quite feel all the difficulty that I am moved by when I think of how this European population, a mixture of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and odds and ends, is to be governed if the Turk goes. Lord Curzon says, I think with justice, that you could not give these regions to Bulgaria, neither do I believe that you could give them to Greece. Is it conceivable that the Americans would take over the government of a considerable area? As far as I understand it has a considerable population.

LORD CURZON: Is not the question partly dealt with in one of the Foreign Office papers, in which I read (it was news to me) that some sort of arrangement had been arrived at by M. Venizelos with the Governments of Roumania, Serbia, and our other Allies in that part of the world, by which the Greeks were to undertake the very responsibilities that you are speaking of, were to penetrate into Eastern Thrace, were to take the islands of the Marmora, were to occupy the territories belonging to the Turkish Government in which their population was numerically in the ascendant, and that that would be a partial solution of the difficulties you are putting?

MR. BALFOUR: They would have the parts of Eastern Thrace, but I do not think that they were to have all these territories. I never heard this.

LORD CURZON: The idea was that the Greeks are to get Gallipoli and Rodosto.

SIR EYRE CROWE: I think so, as far as I understood it.

MR. BALFOUR: I will not argue about that. I do not know where Sir Eyre Crowe gets this information. It has not come to me as far as I know. All that has come to me is that M. Venizelos with the Serbian Minister and the Roumanian Minister came and solemnly informed me that they saw their way to an arrangement that would satisfy all those three Balkan Powers; but they did not tell me what the arangement was, nor did they give me the smallest hint of what it was. So I am not qualified to speak on that.

LORD CURZON: I was only mentioning it as a partial answer to the question you were putting, "What is to become of the populations outside Constantinople?" To that I made the reply that some sort of arrangement appeared to be under discussion.

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MR. BALFOUR: I think that you might give some to Bulgaria and some to Greece; but whatever you give to Bulgaria, and whatever you give to Greece, you will leave a large population to be managed by the mandatory Power. That is a matter which, I think, you will find a very great difficulty. I think that it might make the Americans shrink from the task. I agree with you that they are the best people to do it. I am not pressed personally by the naval argument; but I see that great obstacle in the way.

I see another obstacle. What we want is a permanent settlement, a permanent peace in that part of the world. A mandatory Power is, from the nature of the case, transitory; that is to say, it may be transitory. The mandatory Power holds his land upon a lease. He holds it indefinitely; but it is only a lease. It is not held in possession. Therefore you will have this area, which is coveted, and passionately coveted by Greece, and coveted, and passionately coveted by Bulgaria, always there in in the possession, which is a merely temporary possession, of some nation which has no personal interest, so to speak, in what she holds; no interest at all, in fact, in keeping it except as the mandatory Power. There will therefore be perpetual intrigues which will go on. Constantinople will still be the cause of eternal disagreements among the neighbouring States, and you will not have that fixed and permanent settlement in that part of the world which we hope to have. Those are difficulties which it is easy to state and not easy to solve. If I could see a solution to them I should myself go in for doing what I think Lord Curzon desires to do, and what certainly Sir Eyre Crowe desires to do, which is sending the Turks back to their native highlands, and of course neutralising the Straits, and handing over that particular part of the country which you cannot make over to Greece or to Bulgaria into the hands of some mandatory Power which can only be, as far as I can see, America.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I recognise the enormous difficulties of any settlement of this question. Mr. Balfour has stated them with great power as far as America is concerned. May it not be said that the difficulties he has pointed out will exist whatever you do, even if you leave the Turk there? I have rather reluctantly come round to the view which I did not hold at first, that it would probably be better to get rid of the Turk altogether. Just think what you would have if you left the Turks there. You would have the Sultan there with a very much shorn Empire in Asia. You would have the Powers in control of the Straits and necessarily very much in evidence there. Somebody would have to be there. I do not know whether it would be a mandatory Power or whether it would be an international Power. In any case you would have them all round there. They would be going in and out of Constantinople. You would have the fact that at one period of the war we had definitely promised that Constantinople should be occupied by the Russians, and that as late as the beginning of 1917 we had laid it down as part of our terms that Turkey should be turned out of Europe altogether, and it seems to me quite incredible in those circumstances that the Sultan should be in anything but a very "dicky" position. Then you would have surrounding him the Greeks, who are passionately anxious to have Constantinople, and the Bulgarians, who are equally passionately desirous of having it, and if the Russians ever revive, the Russians will be equally passionately anxious to have it. I think the atmosphere of intrigue would be prodigious, and to have Turkey there in the centre in just the situation they have always lived in, and always enjoyed, and always made capital out of when they were playing one set of Powers against the other, would be a very serious matter, I think. There would be immediately a party formed. Some people would back the Greeks, and some the Bulgarians, and some the Russians, and you would have the Turks enjoying it in the middle and creating trouble, as they always have created trouble between the Western Powers by that means. That seems to me to be a powerful argument. Indeed, if I may say so, it is exactly Mr. Balfour's argument which has driven me to the conclusion opposite to that at which he has arrived. I quite agree that whatever you do the situation cannot be very tolerable. I admit that if the alternative is an international occupation of Constantinople, with a Frenchman in one position and an Englishman in another, and an Italian in another, I rather incline to think that I should prefer to leave the Turks there. But if you can put the Americans in (I do not see anybody else that could possibly be put in), then, on the whole, I believe that that would be the position which is most likely to be permanent. Mind, I quite agree with Mr. Balfour; I think that the difficulties of getting the Americans to go there are enormous. Unless you can cut off practically the whole of the territory and give it to the Greeks, leaving a very small hinterland to Constantinople, I do not believe ——

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MR. BALFOUR: The Chatalja line.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That kind of thing.

LORD CURZON; To whom would you give Adrianople?

MR. BALFOUR: Bulgaria.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You might give it to Bulgaria. I quite agree that it is most desirable that we should, if possible, fall in with the views of the Greeks, the Serbians, and the Roumanians, if they have agreed on some settlement, unless it is grossly unfair to Bulgaria. I do not think that Bulgaria has the slightest claim on us from any point of view. If that is possible I should be rather inclined to see that done.

May I say just one word about the Admiralty point about the Americans? Of course, the Americans would only go there as the mandatory of the League of Nations, or whatever you like to call the European authority. I do not myself see on what ground they should wish to have a fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean; but I think that we have to make up our minds definitely what attitude we are going to take up with regard to the Americans. If we are going to regard any increase in American power as a danger to this country, then I confess I do not see any hope whatever of arriving at a durable settlement under the Treaty of Peace. I think that we must take up the position that, admitting that nothing is certain in the future, the chance of our having to fight the Americans is so remote that it may be neglected, and that we must consider that a growth of American power is not a threat to us at all, but on the contrary is rather a bulwark to our safety than a threat to our safety. Therefore I am not in the least afraid personally of any increase of American power if it were to take place. I personally think it extremely unlikely that the Americans would ever consent to keep any very large naval force in the Eastern Mediterranean because they were the mandatories of the Powers for a little tiny district including Constantinople. As to the Mahommedans I do not feel in an immense difficulty, because the authorities are so conflicting. I do not pretend to have an opinion myself. I observe that Sir A. Hirtzel does not appear quite to see eye to eye with Sir Hamilton Grant, nor does Lord Curzon see eye to eye with Mr. Montagu. Therefore I think that I may say that on the whole I do not think that I should regard that as a danger which I must consider.

MR. MONTAGU: Your solution remains to leave the Turks there unless the Americans will take it?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. I think that the danger of attempting to carry out the international government even of a comparatively small district there would be greater on the whole than leaving the Turk there.

ADMIRAL HOPE: I think that the view the Admiralty take is this—that the size of the Navy determines the policy of the country very largely, and the more commitments America gets outside the United States, or you may say outside the continent of America, the more inducement to her to increase her fleet. Up to a certain limit it is all right; but if she goes beyond that limit it will force us to increase the size of our fleet. So it is desirable from our point of view not to encourage the Americans to undertake commitments outside their own continent. There is no doubt that if the Americans go to Palestine and Turkey, they will maintain a big squadron in the Mediterranean, and that will be a considerable embarrassment to us in the future.

LORD CURZON: If they went to Constantinople in the kind of capacity that has been suggested, namely, in order to exercise police powers, why should they require to strengthen their navy?

ADMIRAL HOPE: There is no particular reason why they should, but, knowing the Americans, I think that they would.

LORD CURZON: What would they have to do with their navy?

ADMIRAL HOPE: They would be possibly in Caucasia as well.

LORD CURZON: We are dealing for the moment with the question of Constantinople, just as we dealt the other day in the Cabinet with the question of Palestine. I could not see then why, if they were placed in charge of Jerusalem, they must have a fleet in the Mediterranean to enable them to do so.

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ADMIRAL HOPE : I think that they will, I do not say that there is any reason. They had the very slightest interest possible in Beirut in Syria, but they kept ships there. I say that it would be a considerable embarrassment to us if they did have a big squadron there.

With regard to the Straits themselves, the proposition of the Admiralty is that the waterways should be administered by machinery similar to the Danube Commission. That has really the administration of the waterways, the lights, pilots, the provision of marks, regulations for the ships passing, the payment of dues as they come along. They would have absolutely no jurisdiction ashore, provided that the forts and fortifications have been destroyed. If they have been destroyed, and there are no guns on the banks of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Commission need not have the slightest administrative work on shore.

The Danube Commission had no administration over Galatz. They merely regulate the waterways.

LORD CURZON : Where do they sit ?

ADMIRAL HOPE : Their headquarters were at Galatz.

SIR EYRE CROWE : Yes.

ADMIRAL HOPE : Supposing that the guns and the fortifications are destroyed, there is no need for anything beyond a small force.

MR. BALFOUR : We should refuse to allow Turkey to have a navy ?

ADMIRAL HOPE : That is assumed.

LORD CURZON : I have never heard the assumption explicitly stated before. I think it ought to be assumed.

ADMIRAL HOPE : If the Turks were turned out of Constantinople they would still have the south shore. Chanak has just as much influence on the waterways as Constantinople has. You must push the Turk out of Chanak too. Supposing that after the Crimean war, or the war of 1868, we had insisted on the demolition of the forts and the freedom of the waterways through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus the whole influence of the Turks would probably have died out.

LORD CURZON : If the Turks were turned out and the forts were demolished, it would equally apply to the southern side of the Straits as the northern.

ADMIRAL HOPE : Yes.

LORD CURZON : Why, then, need you turn him out of Chanak ?

ADMIRAL HOPE : The argument was that, if he remained at Constantinople, he would still have some political effect over the European Powers in the administration of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

LORD CURZON : No, the argument was that he would be able to resume his old game of intrigue.

LORD ROBERT CECIL : The prestige of Constantinople is the real thing.

ADMIRAL HOPE : Provided that there are no fortifications and that the administration of the waterways is in international hands, it really does not matter.

MR. BALFOUR : May I ask one military question ? This is a purely military or naval question. I remember a discussion—I was at the Admiralty, in fact, at the time when much of it was going on—whether you could force the Dardanelles and how you could force them, and I rather came to the conclusion that you could make the place almost intolerable for passenger ships without having any forts at all, by having heavy howitzers right back from the shore, 4 or 5 miles back from the shore, right in the middle of Constantinople. In the old days the forts were the things ; but you can make it very difficult now without forts. I can quite imagine that if the Turks have actual control of Constantinople and of the unfortified lands on each side of the Bosphorus and of the Dardanelles they could put, inland, batteries of a very temporary kind if they had the guns somewhere about, and could have places marked and have everything ready, and could make the place almost impassable, and then if they had had stored mines and torpedoes they could make the thing very difficult, although every permanent fortification were removed. I do not know whether that point of

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view has any military or naval force at all, but I should very much like to hear what the soldiers say about that.

GENERAL THWAITES: The question of the use of howitzers has been very freely demonstrated in this war. You can use a howitzer in exactly the same way as you can use a gun. You can put it behind a wall. But in every case of the use of artillery you must be able to see from some point of view or other the object that you are going to fire at. Therefore, you must have a position of observation; and although you may be able to put your howitzers well back, you must have positions from which your artillery officers must be able to see the object. The persons controlling the fire will have to be sitting somewhere very close to the waterway to be able to see the ships.

MR. BALFOUR: They will. I suppose that there is nothing difficult in that, is there?

GENERAL THWAITES: You must have all the usual communications.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: If you are going to have batteries put back for the defence of this waterway, you will probably have installed telephone arrangements and all these things beforehand.

LORD CURZON: Would not that point be met by some arrangement by which, the forts being knocked down and the Straits internationalised, the Turks, whether they were on the northern shore or the southern shore or on both, would have to submit to certain conditions as regards a zone of territory, say five, six, seven, or eight miles from the sea on both sides, which would be liable to examination, and so on?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You would have to have some kind of international force to watch this.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes, on both sides of the Sea of Marmora and both sides of Gallipoli, and both sides of the Straits. I think that it has been marked out.

LORD CURZON: Yes, on one of the maps.

SIR EYRE CROWE: There is a suggestion that the Turks should be asked to have no armed force.

GENERAL MACDONOGH: Just before coming over here I had a talk with General Milne, who is over here on leave. He had not seen any of the papers at all; but he told me that he thought that the very worst possible solution of the problems would be to establish any kind of international condominium in Constantinople. He said that the intrigue that that would give rise to would be absolutely appalling. He said that he considered that the next worst solution would be to hand over the place to the Greeks. He said that he had seen a great deal of the Greeks during the three-and-a-half years he had been in Salonica, and they were absolutely rotten, and the Government was worse even than that of Turkey. He considered that the second worse way of dealing with the matter. The way which he would prefer himself would have been if Great Britain could have been given a mandate to rule Constantinople for the Turk. I told him that we could not paint the whole map red, and therefore that must be ruled out. His opinion was much the same as Lord Robert Cecil's, that if you could not get America to go there as a mandatory Power the best solution would be to keep the Turk there at present.

SIR LOUIS MALLET: The solution I would like would be to turn the Turk out; but I see great difficulty about it.

LORD CURZON: What does Sir Eyre Crowe say about it?

SIR EYRE CROWE: I take the point of my memorandum that there was a general agreement that the American solution was the best; but failing the American solution, internationalisation of some sort is inevitable.

The Admiralty has referred to the analogy of the Danube Commission, which I have myself also quoted. Admiral Hope will probably know that the fact that Galatz is a Roumanian town has very much hampered the work of the Commission. It is one of the difficulties with which they have to deal that the seat of their activities is a foreign town. From that point of view any Commission which would be established would function better if the town was under their own control. I therefore would borrow the analogy of the Panamá Canal. The Americans control Panamá, and the Americans

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also in the Canal Zone control the shores of the inside waters. The Americans if they exercise police functions would certainly exercise water police functions over the harbours and quays in all the ports in the Marmora. There would be no difficulty about that. We have been drawing up in the Foreign Office in some detail a scheme to give effect to the American Commission. We do not believe that we can give all the powers to the Americans there which they have in Panamá; but I think that it would be essential to them to hold the city of Constantinople. You would have a Turkish Commissioner in the Commission who would have to be in close touch with the American Government. The influence of that Commissioner would be a thing that would affect the working. Everybody would run after him and try to get something out of him.

The argument we have heard about Mahommedan feeling in India is subject to this: if it is the case we must be very, very careful indeed, in dealing with the Sultan, not to do anything to him on account of Mahommedan feeling, the deduction I draw from that is that we perpetuate difficulties in dealing with the Sultan, because every time we want to do something we have to face the difficulty of dealing with Mahommedan feeling. If we once cut the Gordian knot and get rid of the Turk——

LORD CURZON: Supposing that the Americans or some other form of administration were set up in Constantinople, how would you deal with the hinterland?

SIR EYRE CROWE: The only hinterland which at the present time I believe is in question is west of the line Enos–Midia. This is the only territory, and *this* bit of Thrace. I think that everybody is agreed that that is all that is going to be left to Turkey under any scheme. That territory is largely inhabited by Greeks; the principal ports of it are Greek; Rodosto is Greek. With all due respect to General Milne, I entirely disagree with him when he says that the Government of Greece is worse than that of Turkey. It is by no means perfect, but it is a travesty to compare it with that of Turkey. The Greeks do keep order; they have a thriving population; they carry on legitimate trades on perfectly civilised lines, and they are very well able to hold their own. It is quite possible that they do oppress foreign populations—all the Balkan peoples do that. I believe that the Turkish element in this bit of Thrace would clear out. As Lord Curzon pointed out, if the Sultan goes to Brusa or Konia, I think most of those Turks will clear out, just as they cleared out of Crete. I think that the Armenians would clear out.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: You do not think that the Armenians would go, surely? They would stay where they can make money.

SIR EYRE CROWE: I think they might. There is a scheme on foot for concentrating the Armenians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Quite right.

SIR EYRE CROWE: It might be made a condition that they should fill it up.

LORD CURZON: I do not think that we can attempt to sum up our discussion in any resolution. We have really been exploring the ground, and I think that the discussion has been of great value for that purpose. When we come to discuss the matter with President Wilson we shall find that most of the arguments on both sides have been used to-day, and the ground will be a little clearer.

MR. BALFOUR: I will tell you what might be done. It might be worth while to tabulate the arguments.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We might come to the conclusion that, with the exception of Mr. Montagu, we are all agreed that the best solution would be for the Americans to take it over.

MR. BALFOUR: The Admiralty as well as Mr. Montagu.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: And the War Office do not agree with us.

LORD CURZON: I do not think that we are in a position to pass any resolutions. I am quite ready to do what Mr. Balfour suggests, namely, have the arguments on both sides put on a piece of paper.

MR. BALFOUR: That would be useful.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 23, 1918.

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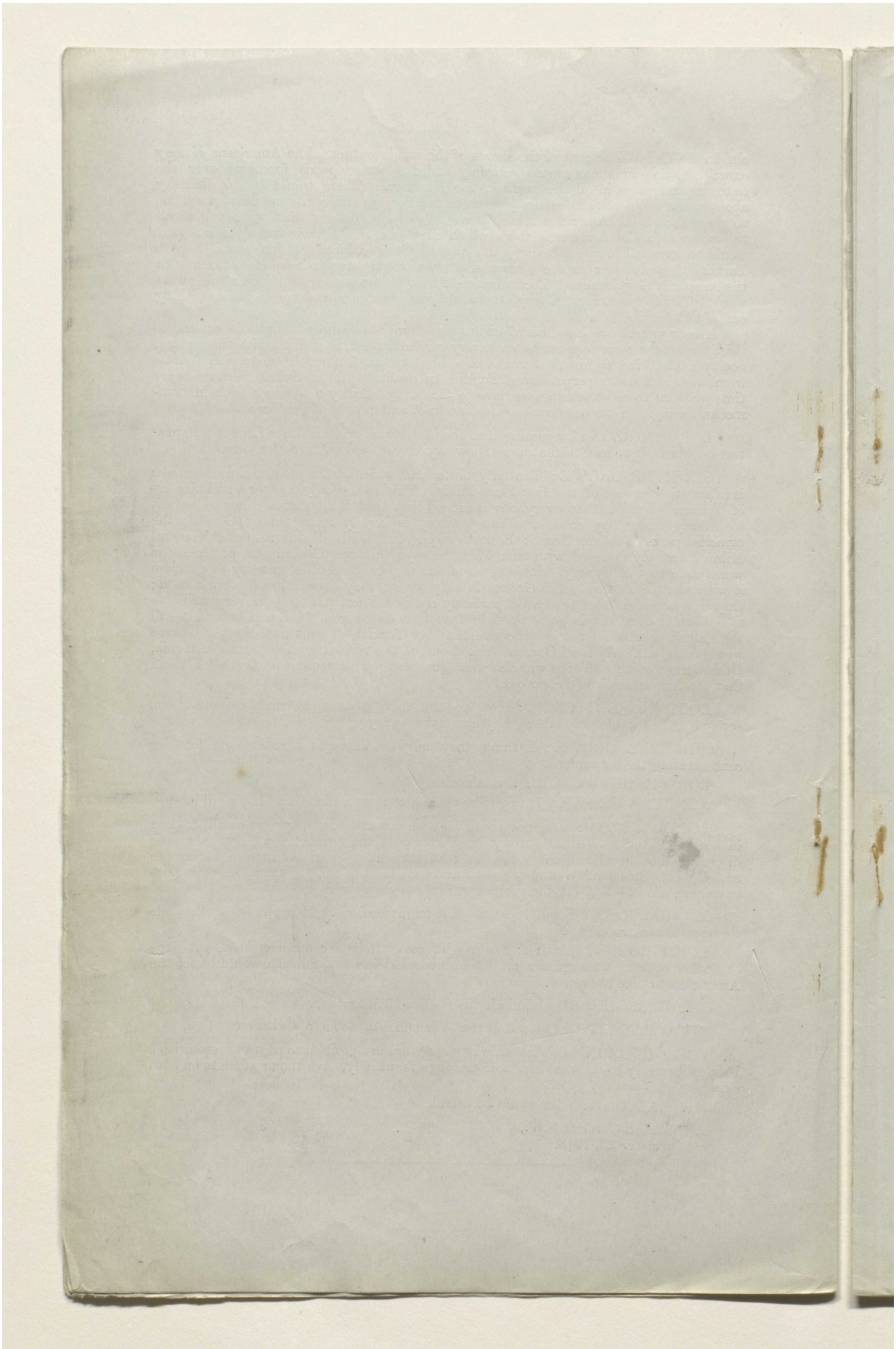

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C., 47th Minutes. 4

WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Thursday, December 26, 1918, at 12 noon.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. A. J. BALFOUR, O.M., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon. *E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon. LORD ROBERT CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended:

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR G. M. W. MACDONOGH, K.C.M.G., C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. GRIBBON, C.M.G., War Office.

SIR A. HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for India.

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Middle Eastern Questions: Arabia.

1. WITH reference to Minutes 2 and 3 of the 44th Meeting, the Chairman invited the Committee to examine the question of the various Arab States and chieftains whose case had not received individual consideration at previous meetings when the future settlement of Arabia had been discussed. Various papers by the Departments concerned, reviewing briefly the history of our relations with several chieftains, and our commitments in each case, and suggesting the lines on which our present policy should be framed, had been circulated (E.C.–2201, 2207, 2214, 2302, 2340, 2350, 2412, 2454, 2467, 2525, and 2599).

The Chairman then successively reviewed the situation in regard to, and our present relations with, the Sultan of Sher and Mokallah, the Sultan of Lahej, the tribes of the Aden Protectorate, the Sultan of Muscat, the trucial chiefs of the Persian Gulf, the Sheikhs of El Katr, Bahrein, Koweit, and Mohammerah, Ibn Saud, Ibn Rashid, the Idrisi, the Imam of Sana'a, the Sheikh of Mavia, and the possession of Sheikh Said.

A general discussion followed, in the course of which Lord Robert Cecil informed the Committee that a draft treaty (from

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which he read brief extracts) with Turkey was in course of preparation in the Foreign Office, to serve as an *aide-mémoire* to our delegates at the Peace Conference.

(A verbatim report of the Chairman's statement and the ensuing discussion is printed as an Annex to these Minutes.)

The Committee were in general agreement on the following points:—

(*a.*) That Great Britain held, both historically and politically, a special position in regard to the Persian Gulf and Arabia, and that if the question were raised at the Peace Conference, which was not in itself desirable, a general recognition of that position by the Powers should be obtained;

(*b.*) That our relations with individual chiefs, in many cases the legacy of a remote past, exclusively concerned ourselves, and were not a matter either for examination or revision by others;

(*c.*) That if the case were discussed, a disclaimer by other Powers of any political interest in Arabia was desirable;

(*d.*) That, in any case, a renunciation of all Turkish claims over Arabia was essential;

(*e.*) That the ideal solution would be a mutual renunciation by Great Britain, France, and Italy of any desire or intention to interfere in spheres where the political influence of the other party or parties was predominant.

Muscat and Sheikh Said.

The Committee took note that negotiations were proceeding with a view to the conclusion of a Treaty with France in respect of a general readjustment of our mutual positions in Egypt, Morocco, &c., and that this Treaty would embrace the outstanding questions of Muscat and Sheikh Said.

Attention was called to a telegram (E.C.–2853) from the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad, recording an interview with the Sheikh of Mohammerah, in which the latter had put forward claims to the Amirate of Mesopotamia, should such a post be set up. If his candidature were favourably considered by Great Britain, the Sheikh projected a pilgrimage through Mesopotamia with a view to canvassing the locality and gaining public acceptance.

Mr. Montagu submitted a draft reply to the Civil Commissioner, instructing him to dissuade the Sheikh from undertaking the pilgrimage and also from pressing his claims to the Amirate, which, it was pointed out, would be a certain source of discord and embarrassment, and would meet with no favour at Baghdad.

The Committee decided:—

(1.) *To approve the Secretary of State for India's draft reply to the Civil Commissioner in reference to the Sheikh of Mohammerah;*

(2.) *That every endeavour should be made to prevent hostilities between King Hussein and Ibn Saud until the end of the war, and that, on the conclusion of peace, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to act as arbitrator between the two, and endeavour to settle their boundaries;*

(3.) *That the discussion as to the future administration of Mesopotamia should be resumed as soon as the Committee were in possession of the final recommendations of the Civil Commissioner, which had been promised by the end of the year.*

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General Resolution regarding the Middle East.

2. The Committee passed the following General Resolution (E.C.–2773) regarding the territories of the Middle East :—

"In no circumstances should any claim by Turkey to share in the sovereignty, real or nominal, of any of the States or territories dealt with in other Resolutions of the Eastern Committee, viz., Mesopotamia, Syria, the Caucasus, Armenia, Palestine, or Arabia, be admitted."

Kurdistan.

3. The Committee had under consideration a Note on Kurdistan (E.C.–2765) by the Political Department, India Office.

Sir A. Hirtzel stated that Sir Erle Richards was anxious to ascertain the views of the Committee in regard to the recommendations by the Civil Commissioner, Baghdad, quoted in paragraph 5 of the Note.

Mr. Shuckburgh said that the people of Southern Kurdistan claimed to exercise the right of self-determination, and had, with certain exceptions, elected to form themselves into a separate confederation under British guidance. Their pronouncement to this effect had been formally accepted by the Civil Commissioner, who asked for the approval of His Majesty's Government to his action.

Lord Robert Cecil expressed his concurrence, subject to the proviso that no definite pledge was given on behalf of His Majesty's Government that Southern Kurdistan would come under British control.

The Chairman thought that the Committee might, in the circumstances, approve the Civil Commissioner's action, but he felt that trouble as to this area was certain to arise between the French and ourselves.

The Committee decided—

To approve the action of the Civil Commissioner at Baghdad with the reservation suggested by Lord Robert Cecil, and authorised the Secretary of State for India to reply in the above sense.

Sir ErleR i chards' Brief.

4. In regard to the point raised by Sir A. Hirtzel (*vide* previous Minute), the Chairman reminded the Committee that at their Meeting on the 27th November, 1918, he had informed them that Sir Erle Richards had been entrusted by General Smuts, on behalf of the Government, with the task of drawing up our case in regard to the Middle Eastern territories in a proper form for presentation to the Peace Conference.

Mr. Montagu said that he understood that Sir Erle Richards had already completed the major portion of his brief, and he expressed the wish that copies of the brief might be circulated to members of the Committee.

Mr. Mowat, on behalf of Sir Erle Richards, who was unable to be present, said that the brief was complete so far as Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Arabia were concerned.

The Committee decided—

That Mr. Mowat should inform Sir Erle Richards that it was desirable that the latter's brief, when complete and approved by the Chairman, should be circulated to the Committee, and that Mr. Mowat should ask Sir Erle Richards to furnish the Secretary with copies for this purpose.

Persia.

5. With reference to Minute 1 of the 45th Meeting, Mr. Montagu enquired when the Committee proposed to resume the discussion of our policy in regard to Persia.

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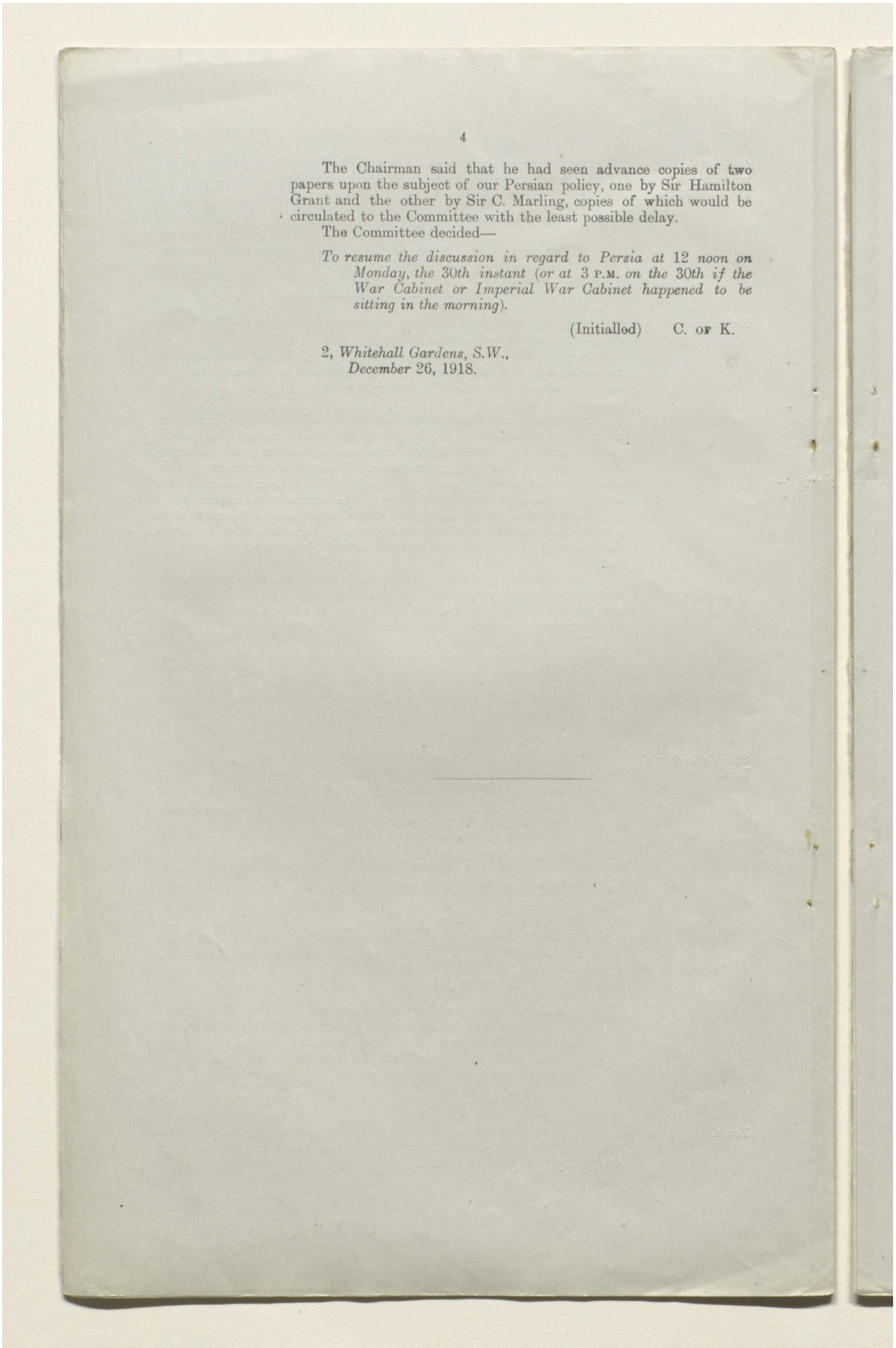

The Chairman said that he had seen advance copies of two papers upon the subject of our Persian policy, one by Sir Hamilton Grant and the other by Sir C. Marling, copies of which would be circulated to the Committee with the least possible delay.

The Committee decided—

To resume the discussion in regard to Persia at 12 noon on Monday, the 30th instant (or at 3 P.M. on the 30th if the War Cabinet or Imperial War Cabinet happened to be sitting in the morning).

(Initialled) C. or K.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Thursday, December 26, 1918, at 12 noon.

MINOR STATES AND CHIEFTAINS IN ARABIA.

LORD CURZON: We will take to-day the other States and chieftains in Arabia who were not covered by our general discussion of the Arabian situation arising out of the position of the King of the Hejaz. In some respects the problem is as difficult as any we have had to approach, not because of the importance of the issues raised, for they are, both individually and collectively, rather small, but because of the relationships of the chiefs, which differ materially from each other, although all of them have been brought into some form of relationship with Great Britain, which it seems essential, in our general interests in Arabia, to maintain. A number of papers* have been circulated to the Committee, both by the India Office and the Foreign Office, about the matter, and I will endeavour briefly to disentangle the situation, dealing as concisely as I can with the different elements concerned, and with the chiefs who fall into the several groups.

If you will imagine the Arabian Peninsula before you, I will commence at the south-western point of Aden, and deal with the southern shores of Arabia and that part of the country the connection of which with Great Britain has been the longest, and which really is not affected, although it has in parts been disturbed by the occurrences of the war. About Aden itself it is unnecessary to say a word. The position of Aden is known. The hinterland of Aden, our position there, and our relations with the chiefs there will have to be re-established after the war. The humiliating position in which we have been placed in the hinterland at no great distance from Aden itself is already, owing to the fact of the Armistice, at an end, and our agreements with the French specially provide for the readjustment of the frontiers of the Aden protectorate. We have there treaty relations with two Sultans, the Sultan of Sher and Mokallah and the Sultan of Sokotra and Kishm, and my impression from the papers is that we have just concluded a new agreement with the former: is not that so?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: No. We have proposed to send a vice-consul there recently.

LORD CURZON: I think we have done or are doing more, but I need not interrupt the meeting to discuss the point. Whether we have or have not, practically he is on the footing of a pre-war chief, whose relations with us, and with us alone, cannot be disputed. The Sultan of Lahej is being reinstated, if he has not already been reinstated, and, broadly speaking, one may say of Aden and the Aden hinterland, and of the chiefs and tribes in the hinterland, that they are British interests, and only British interests, and the idea of any other Power having an interest there cannot be considered, nor for that matter, so far as I know, apart from Turkey, has it ever been suggested.

Then, passing round the coast of Hadramaut, we come, as we approach the shores of India, to Muscat, and of Muscat it is only necessary to say this, that although some of our difficulties with the French, arising out of their attitude, have been mitigated in recent years, there still hangs over us the Anglo-French Declaration of 1862, in which we guaranteed with France the independence of Muscat. The protectorate which we exercise over that country falls little short of annexation, and is undoubtedly inconsistent with its independence; but at times of trouble the French have always been able to flourish this old Declaration in our faces, and there are moments, as, for instance, when I was in India and the incident of Bunder Jisseh occurred, in which it becomes a very serious source of trouble. When M. Picot was here in the course of last year we had a meeting at the Foreign Office, with Mr. Balfour in the chair, at which a rearrangement with France of our general relations with Arabia over the entire field was under discussion, and a formula was sought to be discovered which would involve the general recognition by France of our superior political influence in Arabia. Incidentally the question of Muscat was raised. Stress was laid upon it by the representatives of the Foreign Office and by myself, and M. Picot appeared to indicate that the French Foreign Office would not be averse from surrendering their

* E.C. 2201, 2207, 2214, 2302, 2340, 2350, 2412, 2454, 2467, 2525, 2599.

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last vestige of claims in this respect, and we hoped to have a draft agreement drawn up that would involve that renunciation on their part. Nothing came of the discussion. I am not aware that the agreement ever took substantial form, and it remains one of the things to be arranged, if possible, between the French and ourselves. It is not a matter which concerns the Peace Conference or anybody else, and in any readjustment of the position with France in that quarter I have no doubt that our Foreign Office will press for the abandonment of that particular Declaration.

Turning round the coast of the Persian Gulf, we come to the group of chiefs known as the Trucial Chiefs, our relations with whom sprang out of the conditions of piracy that desolated the Persian Gulf and interfered with trade and shipping there in the early years of the nineteenth century. The trucial chiefs, half-a-dozen, I think, in number, entered into agreements with us then to keep the peace and to refer disputes to our arbitration, not to enter into relations with representatives of any foreign Powers, and not to alienate or lease their territories or grant concessions, excepting with the consent of Great Britain. Here, again, I hope we shall agree that these relations not only must continue, but that they concern nobody but ourselves. I am going to raise later on the question of how far—and it is really the important question we have to discuss to-day—the position in the Persian Gulf and in the interior of Arabia ought to come before the Conference at all, or, if it does come before them, what attitude we should take up. I am only in passing, as I pursue my way round the circumference, dealing with the particular chiefs concerned, and am arguing for the moment that whatever relations we have had with them are matters that concern us and them and nobody else.

To this group of trucial chiefs has been added since the war the chief of El-Katr, on the western shores of the Persian Gulf. This chief was a Turkish subject, and his territory was regarded as part of the Turkish dominions until 1913, when, under the arrangement with Turkey that was being discussed, but was never concluded at that time, he was to pass out of Turkish suzerainty. That was in 1913. In 1916 a formal agreement was made with him of the trucial type, so that from that date we may count him as one more trucial chief—for that reason, he, too, may be dismissed from further consideration.

Then in the hollow of the Gulf there lies Bahrein, the history of which is long and chequered, because Bahrein is an island, or group of islands, to which claims have at different times, and indeed at the same time, been put forward by Persia, Turkey, and ourselves, and I believe there was actually one moment in history when all three flags were flying over the fort in the harbour. When I went up the Persian Gulf and interviewed the then Sheikh, the position was this: he had practically acknowledged the British protectorate, but no protectorate treaty had ever been concluded or has been until this moment. At the same time, his position of dependence upon us was defined to a greater degree than those of the smaller trucial chiefs in his neighbourhood by the fact that we had appointed a political officer there. That officer, I believe, still remains, and whether it is necessary or not to make a new arrangement with the Sheikh of Bahrein after the war is a matter that, to pursue my argument, I think concerns us and Bahrein alone, and does not concern the Powers or the Conference at all.

Then we come to Koweit. The first trouble that arose with Koweit was in 1899, just after I had gone to India, and I sent up an officer who negotiated with him the treaty of 1899, by which he first passed into our sphere. The danger that we then had to face was the aggression of the Turks, who were moving down from the north into his territory, which indeed they were partly threatening, partly attacking, and partly holding, and we had to secure his fidelity to our cause. The then Sheikh, who has since died, was a very strong personality. I remember when I went up the Gulf as Viceroy, he gave me a great reception, and he was very proud of the relationship that had been established between him and the Government of India, and to it from that date he remained faithful to the hour of his death, which occurred during the last few years. His eldest son, who succeeded him, was no good, and was presently succeeded by the second son, who is now the ruling chief. Meanwhile, our relations with the State have been cemented by a subsequent arrangement. In 1907, a fresh agreement was made with the Sheikh of Koweit, arising out of the construction of the Baghdad Railway, and the desirability of securing by agreement with him those harbours and places to which it was possible that the railway, then in contemplation by the Germans and the Turks in combination, might be brought. In the agreements that I was describing just now that were made, or were in course of being made, with the Turkish Government by Lord Grey before the war, the Sheikh of Koweit was left in an extraordinary position—rather like that of Mahommed's coffin. He was left half a Turk and half an ally of

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Britain. That was the Convention of July 1913, but the war having broken out in 1914, in November of that year we took a step forward. We made a further agreement with the Sheikh. We constituted Koweit an independent principality under British protection.

There, again, it seems to me that the only way in which the Sheikh of Koweit need come into the Peace Conference or into the arrangements that have to be made would be if we found it necessary to require of Turkey the renunciation of all claims whatsoever in those regions.

(*At this point Mr. Balfour entered the Meeting.*)

On the other side of the estuary we have the Sheikh of Mohammerah, who is a Persian subject. His connection with Persia, which was fairly substantial when I was there thirty years ago, has been steadily weakening ever since, and he is now practically an independent chief. Simultaneously with the weakening of his relations with Persia, ours with him have been strengthened by a series of agreements. In 1910 we gave him a special assurance of our support for himself and his family as against Persian aggression or the aggression of any foreign Power. In November 1914, soon after the outbreak of war, we repeated this guarantee to him in a more emphatic form, and I suppose it may now be said that the Sheikh of Mohammerah is an independent or a semi-independent chief to whom we are bound by very close ties, ties to which he and his family have been conspicuously loyal during the past twenty years, and that he has definitely passed into our sphere of influence. The Committee will have seen only this morning that, encouraged by his rising position and aware of the difficulties that are occurring in Mesopotamia in carrying out the policy of self-determination, he has put himself forward as a possible candidate for the Amirate of Iraq, pointing out, what is quite true, that he has been a loyal ally, whose fidelity has been proven by many years of good service; that he is a Shiah, and that the bulk of the inhabitants of that district are Shiahs; that he will be popular with the people of Basra in the neighbourhood where he is well known, and other arguments to the like effect. But the political officer at Baghdad points out that possible as his candidature might be if it were confined to those regions, it would be the very worst possible candidature for Baghdad, which is a much more advanced centre, where the population are Sunni and where the intrusion of an Arab-Persian Sheikh would be quite impracticable. He therefore thinks that this suggestion on the part of the Sheikh, upon which the latter is prepared to spend 20,000*l.* or 30,000*l.* out of his own pocket, should be dissuaded at once, and I believe the Secretary of State has brought a draft telegram which he is about to submit to the Committee suggesting that course. We might interrupt my argument for the moment to find out whether Mr. Balfour agrees that that ought to be done.

MR. BALFOUR: I should think so, but I am a little startled at the theory that you cannot have a Shiah Prince of Mesopotamia, or head of a Mesopotamian State, under us, because Baghdad is Sunni, and that you cannot have a Sunni because the rest of your population is Shiah. It is rather an embarrassing doctrine.

LORD CURZON: I do not think it is, because we are now considering a single Amir, and what it means is that they do not want a single Amir at all, either Sunni or Shiah. That brings us to the other alternative—that what they will probably ask for is a disguised British protectorate, assisting the creation of native institutions in each of the provinces of this united area.

MR. BALFOUR: That will suit us best.

LORD CURZON: Wilson says they are all going to advise against any single Amir at this stage. Mr. Montagu, will you read your proof?

MR. MONTAGU: "Apart from objections mentioned in your telegram, His Majesty's Government consider that the status of Sheikh as Persian subject disqualifies him from Amirate of Iraq. Please take the steps proposed to discourage his candidature, while expressing full appreciation of his loyal friendship."

LORD CURZON: I think that is right.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes, I quite agree.

LORD CURZON: I have been dealing so far with the chiefs with whom we had relations before the war. I must now say a word about a group with whom we have established relations since the war, and who pass, therefore, rather reluctantly, so far

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as we are concerned, into our sphere. The first of these is Bin Saud, with whom we made a treaty in December 1915. Bin Saûd, as we all know here, is the Amir of Nejd, and he is a formidable Arab chieftain inheriting considerable prestige, and although of a somewhat pugnacious and turbulent description, at the same time he possesses a distinct and rather powerful personality. In our treaty with him of December 1915, we recognised him as the independent Sovereign of certain territories to be defined hereafter. These territories, broadly speaking, are Nejd, Al-Hasa, Katif (or Jubail). We promised him protection against aggression by any foreign Power to such extent and in such manner as, after consulting with Bin Saud himself, we might think most effective, and the Committee will remember the difficulty we have had over the interpretation of the phrase "foreign Power," because when the collision occurred between his men and King Hussein's over Khurma, we had to explain that by "foreign Power" we did not mean any Power differing from his own: in other words, we did not mean an Arabian Power, but we did mean Turkey or a European Power. I will not pause to argue the question of Bin Saud, which has been a very troublesome one. In my own mind I cannot help thinking that he and King Hussein will sooner or later have to fight it out, and perhaps it is the best thing that could happen if they did so. If they do not, I suppose that when the war comes to an end we shall have to make some effort to define the boundaries of these two chiefs and to keep them at peace with each other. In the friction and conflict between the two, I think we shall all agree that our interests lie rather on the side of Hussein than they do on the side of Bin Saud. One of the most useful moves that has been made lately is taking Bin Saud out of the Indian sphere and bringing him into relations, as we have done, with the Jeddah side.

MR. MONTAGU: I do not think the proposal is to transfer him from the Indian side. I think all that has happened is that Philby had been removed and that Wingate had been asked to suggest to us a successor to Philby. I think Bin Saud is still where he was.

LORD CURZON: I was alluding not merely to that, but also to the proposal that communications which are addressed to him now should be sent from the Jeddah side.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Even that has broken down. Wingate is very much against it.

LORD CURZON: Is your point that you think the old orientation not only does remain, but ought to remain?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Not that it ought to remain, but that in point of fact it does remain.

LORD CURZON: Next there are the groups of chiefs on the eastern shores of the Red Sea—who were under Turkish sovereignty or suzerainty, with differing degrees of independence, before the war—the Idrisi, the Imam of Sana'a, and the Sheikh of Mavia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Are you coming back to Rashid?

LORD CURZON: I had omitted Rashid. Just as Bin Saud threw in his lot with us, so Bin Rashid threw in his lot with the Turks. I think he held Turkish military rank, and undoubtedly, in the earlier years of the war, he was in close communication with them. We remember the difficulties that arose between Bin Rashid and Bin Saud. At one moment we encouraged Bin Saud to attack and demolish Rashid. Later on we gave the opposite advice.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: He would not do anything for months, and then, when things were getting more favourable, he thought of doing something, but by that time we thought it was useless that he should do anything.

LORD CURZON: Meanwhile, Bin Rashid solved the difficulty by making his peace with King Hussein, and therefore he may be said to have passed over into our sphere, and need no longer be treated as Turcophile. I conclude that his relations with the Turkish Government have come to an end, and that that question will only arise in the event of our requiring from the Turks any general renunciation of their claims in that part of the world.

To revert to the chiefs on the eastern shores of the Red Sea, the Idrisi was practically independent before the war, though we recognised him in the agreements of

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1913–1914 with the Turks, that were never finally concluded, as being under the sovereignty of Turkey. What his position will be after the war it is a little early to say. Commander Hogarth, in his paper, argued that the Idrisi would never be of any use to us at all, that we should see that King Hussein gets the port of Kunfida, about which there has been some difficulty, and that the Idrisi should not get the port of Hodeida. Colonel Lawrence, in his paper, said the Idrisi was looked upon as a heretic and that his disappearance was only a matter of time.

The Imam of Sana'a is the only chief in these parts, if I remember right, with whom we have no treaty at all. He was nominally under Turkish suzerainty, but, although he was fighting for the Turks, he really claimed a considerable independence of them. I believe the view of the India Office is that we ought to have a treaty with him somewhat similar to that which we concluded with the Idrisi in April 1915.

The position of the Sheikh of Mavia raises a small point, not without importance, about which I wish to ask the India Office and the Foreign Office. This Sheikh's territory includes the disputed point of Sheikh Said, which those of us who have been through the Red Sea remember on the coast opposite the island of Perim, being within gunshot of the latter. We recollect the French claims, really of a very slender description, that have been put forward to this place from time to time, and our persistent refusals to recognise them. In the earlier stages of the war we were always going to attack Sheikh Said, and, in Mr. Asquith's Government, I more than once raised the question at the War Council, with Sir William Robertson, whether a small number of troops could not be diverted from Aden to attack this place and put an end to the trouble for ever. My recollection is that, under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, we had liberty to take such steps as might be required in connection with the frontier of the Aden protectorate, and it was never argued that we were prevented from doing this by any arrangement with the French or anybody else. It was merely the inability to find troops at the moment.

MR. MONTAGU: General Cox did take it once.

LORD CURZON: During the war?

GENERAL COX: Yes, on the 10th November, 1914. My Brigade took the forts, razed all the barracks to the ground and blew up the guns, but we had to leave again next day.

LORD CURZON: Do the India Office regard that as having been a formal taking of possession?

MR. MONTAGU: No, because we came away again. I do not remember the circumstances in which we had to come away.

GENERAL COX: I was ordered to rejoin my convoy as soon as I could, and go on to Egypt.

LORD CURZON: Has there been any reassertion of authority?

GENERAL COX: Yes. The Turks have come back.

LORD CURZON: Are they there now?

GENERAL COX: I believe so.

LORD CURZON: I think they ought to go.

GENERAL COX: I think they are going.

LORD CURZON: Is the view of the India Office that, the Turks having gone under the terms of the armistice, it falls to us to make new arrangements?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: New arrangements have to be made, I think.

LORD CURZON: With whom?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Presumably with the local Arabs. It is outside the limits of the Aden protectorate. It is in the Sheikh of Mavia's territory, I think.

SIR A. HIRTZEL: His influence extends down there, but I do not know whether it is actually in his territory. It is in his sphere of influence. There is a local Sheikh from whom the French claim originally to have leased it.

LORD CURZON: That is a point which the India Office will have to decide. May I now put the concluding question to which we have to find an answer? Are we to allow our relations with all these people to come under discussion at

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the Peace Conference at all? Reading through the papers, I cannot be quite clear as to what the attitude of the India Office and the Foreign Office is upon this point. Some time ago Captain Wilson, at Baghdad, suggested that we should declare a British protectorate over Bahrein, Koweit, &c., and to that it was at once pointed out that such action might raise difficult questions at the Peace Conference. The India Office, in their paper about the future of these parts of the world, advise against the question being raised at the Peace Conference at all. On the other hand, in another paper, they say that our sole right to conclude treaties with some of these chiefs—I think they are referring for the moment to the Idrisi, the Imam of Sana'a, and the Sheikh of Mavia—ought to be recognised by the Powers. Personally, I wonder whether the Peace Conference will have time to deal with these matters at all, or whether it is competent to deal with them, and my own inclination would be as far as possible to keep the whole of these matters away from it. Our relations with almost all these chiefs date from a long time past. They have reference to the safety of our Indian Empire, the policing of the seas, and matters which concern the East rather than the West, and I think that we should take the same line about them and our relations with them that the French, for instance, would take if anybody attempted to bring up at the Peace Conference the relations into which they may have entered with the hinterland chiefs of Tunis or Algeria. The thing would not be dreamt of for a moment. It may be said that the position of Turkey in the neighbourhood of this scene places the matter in a different perspective, and it may be argued—I think I have seen something in a Foreign Office paper which leads me to think that they would regard it as a good thing—that our general position in that part of the world should be recognised. That may be so, if the attempt to secure recognition does not involve the digging up of each treaty with each chief, and a minute investigation of these very complicated arrangements that I have been speaking of here. I suppose that if any questions were asked about the matter at the Conference we should be perfectly willing to lay our cards upon the table, and to say that the history of the past century has driven us into these relations with all these people; that they are vital to our position in the East, and not merely to the safety of the Indian Empire, but to trade, to freedom from piracy on the seas—in fact, to the freedom of the seas—and we should say "any explanation that you want us to give, we shall be most happy to give." We would willingly do that, but I hope that we shall not encourage any of these people to form the idea that their fate is a legitimate subject of discussion at the Peace Conference, or that any decision of the Peace Conference will be required upon them. That is what I say by instinct rather than by any formal process of reasoning, and I put the case in this rather tentative way with a view of ascertaining what the views of the Foreign Office and India Office are about the matter. I think that is all I need say in general preface.

MR. MONTAGU: A certain part of the territories which you have been discussing this morning is dealt with by Resolution No. 1, which we passed the other day on the Hejaz and Arabia, namely, "It is desirable that the special position of Great Britain and Arabia should be recognised by the Powers, as it has already been with the French Government." I presume that would apply, at any rate, to Central Arabia and the East Coast; and that really does seem to me to show that at any rate at our last meeting, when we discussed these things, we did contemplate the possibility of our position in Arabia being discussed.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: My recollection of that proposition is this—that I urged that it would be a pity to bring it up, since the French had already given us recognition of our special position, and that the only other Power that was likely to raise any question about it was Italy; and that it did not really matter very much to us whether they did nor did not raise it, and, therefore, it should only be brought up if Mr. Balfour, or whoever is there at the time, saw an opportunity of clearing it out of the way, casually so to speak, without bringing it before the Conference. But it seems to me the more difficult question is whether we ought not to sweep out of the way the Turkish claims. My view of the Peace Conference is that it is a conference to make peace, and we ought, as far as possible, to avoid any discussions there of any subject that is not directly connected with making peace between the belligerents. They will have heaps to do, in any case. When we come to say what is to be the position of Turkey as the result of the war, I do not see quite how we can avoid saying, "Well, we want the abandonment by Turkey of Syria, Mesopotamia, and so on, and all Turkish claims in Arabia." I do not see myself how you can avoid saying that.

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MR. BALFOUR: No, but there are two ways of saying it. You can either say what Turkey gives up, or you can say what she retains. If you say what she retains, everything which you do not say that she retains, she does give up by inference.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I quite agree. All I meant was this. I sympathise very much with Lord Curzon's view. It will be a great nuisance to have the French raising all sorts of discussions as to the exact relations that we have with each of these Arab chiefs, and it would be much better if we could keep the discussions out. But I do not quite see how we could say it was out of order, so to speak, for them to raise the matter. They evidently can and must rise, and there will be a great deal of discussion as to our position and the Powers' position with reference to the rest of the Turkish Empire, and I do not quite see how you will be able to exclude these other things.

MR. BALFOUR: Suppose the process were this. You say to the Turks, "Your limits are so-and-so. You shall not go further east than Armenia; you shall not go further north than the Black Sea; you shall not go further south than so-and-so; you shall not have European Turkey," or anything which may ultimately be decided on. That settles Turkey. Turkey has no more questions to ask. How do the other things come in?

LORD CURZON: May I say, in passing, there will be another way of doing the same thing. You are suggesting that south of a certain line, or beyond a certain line, Turkish claims should be renounced or not recognised. You can say, in a sentence which would be more intelligible to the Eastern world, that all her claims over Mesopotamia and Arabia—or, if you like to drop Mesopotamia out, over Arabia—are henceforward abandoned. That covers everything.

MR. BALFOUR: You would have to say Armenia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: This is the way in which it has been put by Hurst in making a rough draft of a preliminary treaty in order to see how the thing looked.

MR. BALFOUR: Then, of course, the question does arise that the French may say, "Very well, that is all right. Turkey has nothing to do with this. But you admit that you cannot settle Mesopotamia without the Conference, or Syria without the Conference, or Armenia without the Conference: how, then, can you settle these other things?"

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is what I am afraid of. What the French will want to say is, "You are getting a lot in Arabia. That must all be counted"—quite inaccurately—"to the British share," and, of course, if it is going to be put in that kind of way, if we are going to discuss this territorial question from that point of view and not from the General Smuts' point of view, then that will be a powerful factor.

MR. BALFOUR: We always come up against, and we shall throughout all this Conference, the poverty of our political terminology. We want quite different relations with these tribes to what we want with Mesopotamia. In the case of Mesopotamia, we want to see that there is tolerable government there. We do not want that in regard to these people. We have not got two names to describe two things. There are other analogous things, and it is going to be most serious, because observe how it has come up in this particular case. The French will say, "You want to have a protectorate over these places, just as you do in Mesopotamia." We shall have to say "No, we do not; we want to keep out everybody else, and we want to see they do not have relations with foreign Powers; but we do not care how they fight among themselves, within limits, and that is not a protectorate." We have no word for it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Nor is the proposed situation in Mesopotamia a protectorate.

MR. BALFOUR: It is quite different to Egypt. That is another illustration of the same thing.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: There is every variation.

MR. BALFOUR: Yes, and only one word for every variation.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not think it would be possible to have anything except some such general phrase as "sphere of influence" or "sphere of interest,"

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because almost every chief differs. It is not only that you want something different between Mesopotamia and Arabia, but, as a matter of fact, they are quite different. Our position with regard to some of the chiefs, Mohammera, for instance, or Koweit, is much closer than it is with regard to Bin Saud.

LORD CURZON: We do not want to stereotype our treaty agreements with them; we want to prevent them from concluding any treaty with anybody else.

MR. BALFOUR: That is it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: A kind of Monroe doctrine.

MR. MONTAGU: You should not mention the word protectorate.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No.

MR. BALFOUR: But you must call it something.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should say you want something in the nature of a Monroe doctrine.

MR. BALFOUR: That will not work from a Conference point of view.

LORD CURZON: The phrase we used the other day in regard to Syria and Palestine was "special political interest."

MR. MONTAGU: "The British Empire has special political interests, and, as such, is subject to the consent of the local rulers and Powers most qualified"——

LORD CURZON: What are you quoting from?

MR. MONTAGU: I am quoting from one of these documents. Mr. Balfour, is not there this danger, too? I understand that in the offing of the Peace Conference there will be Faisal. Supposing Faisal said, "You are going to take Beirut, or some place like that, and if I want to have that part of Syria, I should like, next to my father's dominion, the [inaudible] and all the rest of it;" through his trying to negotiate with the French, and the French trying to get him territory that they do not want, all these treaties with these chiefs might come up.

LORD CURZON: I have not seen Faisal, but do you think he is likely to do that, because it would involve him in incessant warfare during the first ten years of his father's reign?

MR. MONTAGU: Would not he like to have territory that we promised Bin Saud, at least?

LORD CURZON: I thought Faisal's interests lay away to the north. But, generally speaking, we are agreed, are we not, that we must, as far as possible, keep these things away from the Conference?

MR. BALFOUR: Yes. You have touched upon a thing which is one of the things I most hope to get out of the Conference, though I do not think it is very likely, and that is an absolute exclusion of French and Italians from our part in exchange for an absolute exclusion of us from their part. We shall be perpetually quarrelling for generations if we do not do that.

LORD CURZON: When you say "their part," their part of what?

MR. BALFOUR: Of Asia and Africa, and everywhere. It is where two civilised countries are struggling for the mastery that all the difficulties occur, and if we could have clean-cut spheres it would be much better. Look at what is going on in Morocco now with the Spaniards. Look at the incessant danger we are going to have over Abyssinia. All these are things that make for war and trouble.

LORD CURZON: Some allusion has been made to draft treaties that are being drawn up in the Foreign Office by Mr. Hurst. Are they treaties that it is proposed to conclude with Turkey or with the Powers, or with whom?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: Turkey and the Powers.

LORD CURZON: Are there several treaties, or only one, with Turkey?

SIR LOUIS MALLET: One treaty with Turkey.

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: He came to me some time ago and asked if I saw any objection to drafting the treaty just to see how it looked, and I said it might do very well, because, unless you put down a thing in writing first, you do not know exactly what you do mean.

LORD CURZON: We ought, perhaps, to ask the view of the Government of India on this. There was a telegram from the Viceroy, whose suggestion was this—that the position as regards Arabia should be explained at the Conference, and that general recognition of our position should be asked for. Those are very general terms, and I do not know exactly what was meant.

MR. MONTAGU: There seem to me to be two things in regard to which we could ask the French for certain definite agreements—the abrogation of the Declaration of 1862 with regard to Muscat, and the disposal of any lingering French claim to Sheikh Said.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: That is being done in connection with the Morocco-Egyptian negotiations.

LORD CURZON: Why do not you put Muscat into it also?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: That is being done, too.

LORD CURZON: Is this a mere draft that is being drawn up, or is it under actual discussion?

MR. SHUCKBURGH: I think Sir Ronald Graham is discussing it.

LORD CURZON: Egypt, Morocco, Muscat, Sheikh Said?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: It is really Egypt and Morocco, primarily, the main purpose being to settle things like Capitulations, and things of that kind.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Muscat and Sheikh Said are being thrown in.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is very intelligent. I do not know that.

MR. MONTAGU: So far as most of the other chiefs we have been talking about to-day are concerned, we do not want anything new. We have treaties with them. By these treaties they are not allowed to have any foreign relations with any other Power, so we have nothing to fear from the French and Italians.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We do not want anything from anybody. I suppose, as a matter of regularity, we ought to get a renunciation from Turkey?

MR. MONTAGU: Yes, and then if Turkey renounces, as Mr. Balfour stated, it seems to me desirable that we should be recognised as the only Power that has any interest there.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes. It will all work into the League of Nations.

LORD CURZON: But we do not want, do we, the League of Nations to set up a mandatory power over these chiefs?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: No, but if they said, "We recognise nobody ought to interfere in these districts except the British——"

LORD CURZON: Supposing, for instance, we had to regularise the position of the Sheikh of Bahrein and to conclude a formal protectorate with him, we ought not to have to go to the League of Nations, or anybody. We ought to be free to do it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Quite.

MR. MONTAGU: If this thing could be got into the treaty, it absolutely does it: "The High Contracting Parties recognise that by reason of the proximity of the Arabian Peninsula to other portions of the British Empire and to the maritime communications with India, Great Britain has special interests in the peninsula and, as such, is, subject to the consent of the local rulers, the Power most qualified to afford those rulers help and guidance. The other High Contracting Parties, in consequence, declare that they seek no political influence for themselves in that region."

LORD CURZON: That is very good, but that is an agreement between the Powers?

MR. MONTAGU: A suggested agreement, between whom

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MR. BALFOUR: That is very good as between us. It contains very good things as regards our relations with our Allies and with other Powers, but I do not see why Turkey comes in at all.

LORD CURZON: Turkey has interests there.

MR. BALFOUR: If you say she has no share in the interests outside her territories, cut it all off.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: She merely comes in like everybody else, as one of the people who ought not to interfere any more.

LORD CURZON: Is it the idea at the Peace Conference that we shall go with a draft treaty of that sort in our hands and suggest to our Allies that it is to be the basis of our future arrangements with Turkey?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: That is the object, yes. When we come to discuss the thing we shall have a draft ready and say, "This is what we mean."

MR. BALFOUR: If you are reciting all our claims, are you wise to omit our traditional and historic work in the policing of those seas, our traditional connection with that area, and all the work we have done for mankind there?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I should think that ought to go in.

LORD CURZON: That argument is developed in the paper which has been prepared in the Foreign Office.

MR. BALFOUR: It does not, however, get any mention there, if I heard the recital rightly.

MR. MONTAGU: No, it does not.

SIR A. HIRTZEL: I think the idea was that the British representatives at the Conference would simply make a statement as regards what we had done in the Persian Gulf, and leave it at that as something not to be discussed—as something we were not prepared to discuss.

LORD CURZON: I would like to ask the India Office about the point I did touch on more than once—namely, what is to happen with Bin Saud and Hussein? I said I had it in my own mind that these two people would have to fight it out. There are telegrams urging us to put pressure here, and withdraw troops there, and so on.

MR. MONTAGU: It seems to me we ought to hope that our efforts will be successful in keeping them apart to the end of the war, and that then we should offer to fix, as we are pledged to do, I think, the boundaries between them.

A MIDDLE-EASTERN DEPARTMENT.

LORD CURZON: One great question in regard to the future of the areas we are dealing with, and these chiefs in Arabia, is, "Will they be, as they are now, under the Indian Government"?

MR. MONTAGU: I suppose they will come under the new Middle East Department.

LORD CURZON: I was raising the question, with what Government in the future will the relations with these people be? The bulk of them have been in relationship with the Government of India alone for 100 years. Mesopotamia, we understood, was going to be regulated from this country, either under a Middle East Department or a Middle East Secretary of State. If such a Department is created with a Secretary of State, will the whole of these chiefs go to him?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think so. I do not know what the views of this meeting are, but, as far as the Foreign Office are concerned, we have put everything into the Middle East Department, including Egypt.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: That was approved in principle.

LORD CURZON: That would mean that they would be taken—for instance, the Persian Gulf, or at any rate the Arab shores of the Persian Gulf—entirely away from the Government of India?

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LORD ROBERT CECIL: Yes, only the Middle East Department is to be put in close relationship, in some way or another, with the India Office and the Foreign Office.

MR. MONTAGU: It can only be taken away from the Government of India if their interests are safeguarded.

LORD CURZON: Have you ever drawn up your conclusions? Have you ever put them in writing?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not know that I have, except in various minutes to Mr. Balfour.

LORD CURZON: You contemplate not merely creating a Department and combining the interests of the Foreign Office and the India Office, but having a Secretary of State, with the full authority of a Secretary of State, at the head?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Ultimately, yes. I thought it would ultimately grow into that; but whether it was to begin in that way or slowly grow was not ever made quite clear. There was some plan by which Sir Arthur Hirtzel and Sir Eyre Crowe were to meet and discuss what could be done. I do not know whether that was ever done.

SIR A. HIRTZEL: Yes. I think Sir Eyre Crowe put up a minute.

LORD CURZON: What will happen now, when we get to the Peace Conference. Is your new Middle East Department doing it, or both the Offices?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: Both the Offices. I have urged that we should try and get it into one hand, but the technical difficulties of doing it have been too much for me so far.

LORD CURZON: When the new Government is formed and you, unhappily, are not in office, is Mr. Balfour then responsible for the whole of this? For the moment he is.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do not know. The new Assistant Secretary of State may do it.

MR. MONTAGU: I have always felt that you could never administer these countries by any authority unless the special interests of India were safeguarded. No plan, it seems to me, has yet been devised, because the suggestions that always seem to me to be the best for the moment are the situations analogous to the Department of Overseas Trade and combination between the two Offices. That seems to me to be the best for the moment, and that has not so far proved acceptable. Simply handing these districts to the Foreign Office does not give me sufficient guarantees. Our recent history with regard to Persia teaches us a lesson on that.

KURDISTAN.

LORD CURZON: Have not we a small question about Kurdistan? We were asked by the India Office to give authority.

MR. MONTAGU: Only to approve what Colonel Wilson has been telling us occurred. I think that is all.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Authorising carrying on as at present if the Committee are satisfied.

LORD CURZON: I think it is right. I foresee trouble, however, with the French over this.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: The Kurds in certain regions have self-determined themselves, and asked to be made into a separate Confederation attached to the Iraq State, and Wilson is encouraging them on those lines. We should like to be able to tell him he is quite right.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I see no objection to that. Of course, he must not do anything to give them a definite pledge that they are going to be under British control.

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MR. SHUCKBURGH: No. That I think he has not done.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think he ought to be warned about that. We shall put ourselves hopelessly wrong with the French if we do that.

SIR ERLE RICHARDS' BRIEF.

SIR A. HIRTZEL: The point was really raised by Richards, who wants to know what he is to put in the draft memorandum which he is preparing about it.

LORD CURZON: What is that memorandum about?

SIR A. HIRTZEL: It covers the whole of Mesopotamia. I think you approved it.

LORD CURZON: His original Mesopotamia draft? It had to be corrected a good deal. Is this the revised version?

SIR A. HIRTZEL: I have only seen one, which he said you had approved, but he had to leave a blank here.

PERSIA.

LORD CURZON: What else have we before us?

MR. MONTAGU: We did not ever finish Persia.

LORD CURZON: We did not have a very satisfactory discussion on Persia the other day. I think matters are a little less complicated than they were. Sir Charles Marling has put his views rather more definitely, and I think with greater effect than he did here. Whether it is desirable to resume the discussion I do not know.

MR. MONTAGU: We might have resolutions on it.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think we ought to have a policy about Persia.

LORD CURZON: I have a very clear idea of what our policy ought to be. My views are those of the author of the Foreign Office papers, and to hear an ex-Minister argue the other day that our interests in Persia are wholly insignificant, and that we could afford to let the country drift into chaos while we looked on, shocked me greatly. It would be tearing to pieces the work of a century, and it would be one of the greatest derelictions of duty for which a British Government had ever been responsible. I do not know whether my views are shared by the whole of the Eastern Committee, but I am quite prepared to have a discussion about it again, and to read these papers and endeavour to draw up some propositions.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I think it would be very useful if you could find time to do it.

LORD CURZON: Is that the only subject that is left over?

COLONEL STORR: The War Office are very anxious to have the whole question of railways in Mesopotamia discussed.

LORD CURZON: That is not a Peace Conference question. That is a matter for the ordinary meeting of the Eastern Committee. I want to wipe out the things that may come up at the Peace Conference.

MR. MONTAGU: We have not quite finished Mesopotamia.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: We have not settled the particular form of Arabian Government.

LORD CURZON: We are waiting for the replies.

MR. SHUCKBURGH: Captain Wilson promised his final reply by the end of the year.

LORD CURZON: I think we ought to deal with Persia while the matter is fresh in our minds.

2, *Whitehall Gardens, S.W.*,
December 26, 1918.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C., 48th Meeting.

WAR CABINET. 4

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 30, 1918, at 12 noon.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. LORD R. CECIL, K.C., M.P., Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The following also attended:

The Right Hon. SIR LOUIS MALLET, G.C.M.G., C.B., Foreign Office.

Mr. L. OLIPHANT, C.M.G., Foreign Office.

SIR ARTHUR HIRTZEL, K.C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for India.

SIR ALFRED HAMILTON GRANT, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Lieutenant-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.

Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Mr. J. M. KEYNES, C.B., Treasury.

SIR HENRY ERLE RICHARDS, K.C.S.I., K.C.

Mr. R. MOWAT.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, *Secretary*.

Trans-Caspia: Statement of British Policy.

1. THE Chairman said that the India Office had requested a decision of the Committee on a telegram from General Malleson which had been communicated by the Viceroy a day or two previously (E.C.-2858) to the following effect:—

> "It is stated that the statement of British [?] policy is for publication, and as announcement of our desire to see strong independent States in Georgia, Daghestan, and Russian Azerbaijan, would raise much adverse comment among those who still hope for a united Russia, I propose making public the following announcement:—
>
> "In view of constant stream of untruth put out by Moscow and Tashkend wireless stations, I am authorised categorically to state that British Government has no intention either of

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annexing or of declaring a protectorate in any of the countries formerly part of Russian Empire, either east or west of the Caspian. The object of British Government and its Allies is simply to pacify disturbed regions, to complete evacuation of German and Turk forces, and then leave the peoples of these territories at the earliest possible moment in the free enjoyment of complete liberty under such system of government as they themselves shall have freely determined."

General Malleson had been ordered to defer action pending orders from His Majesty's Government. The Chairman said that he had no recollection of any such announcement having been authorised. The statement, apparently emanating from Constantinople, represented generally what had been the views of the Committee, but they could not therefore be accepted or announced as the British Government's avowed policy. On the other hand, General Malleson's formula seemed to be free from objection.

Lord Robert Cecil said that after a Meeting when the question had been discussed by the Committee the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had spoken to him about the question of our policy, and the desirability of communicating its general lines to our military commanders in the Middle East, and he had accordingly drafted a telegram for General Wilson on the lines of the discussion.

Sir A. Hirtzel said that the War Office telegram was, he understood, a summary of various resolutions which had been passed by the Committee, but had not been intended for publication.

General Thwaites said that the War Office telegram had been sent to General Milne, General Marshall, and General Malleson, for their information as military commanders, but not for publication. It had been sent in response to a request received from General Milne who had urged, before he sent troops to Batum, that he should be acquainted with the general lines of our policy.

The Committee decided :—

That the War Office and India Office respectively should immediately telegraph to Constantinople and to our various military commanders concerned in the Middle East to the effect that, the War Office statement was a summary of the views of the Cabinet Committee, but that it was not intended to be used for purposes of publication. If, however, a pronouncement of the kind suggested by General Malleson was required, there was no objection to his announcement being published provided that it stopped at the words "Turk forces."

The Caucasus and Armenia: Despatch of British Troops.

2. The Chairman said he had been rather disturbed by a telegram dated 26th instant (E.C.–2898) which had been received from General Headquarters, Constantinople, communicating a message from Baku, of which he read the following extract : "It is reported by Colonel Jordan that Georgians state it is unnecessary to send British troops to maintain order in Georgia. Should troops enter for other reasons it can only be with Georgian Government's consent, and interior affairs must not be interfered with in any way. Thomson has replied that present attitude of Georgian Government will entail entry of large number British troops." The Chairman said that it had never been the intention of the British Government to send troops to occupy Georgia. All they proposed to do was to despatch enough troops to protect the line from Batum to Baku. It now appeared, however, that General Thomson contemplated extended operations, although this formed no part of our policy. He suggested that it might be advisable to caution General Thomson to exercise greater reserve in these matters.

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The Committee decided—

To instruct the War Office to telegraph at once to say that the military commanders both at Batum and Baku should be informed that it was no part of His Majesty's Government's policy to embark on any operations at any distance from the Baku-Batum line, as our troops in that area were intended for the purpose of protecting the railway and maintaining through communication from the Black Sea to the Caspian.

Persia: Payment of the Cossack Brigade.

3. Lord Robert Cecil said that he wished to raise two points in connection with the Cossack Brigade: first, were we to continue to pay it, and second, if so, was it to be paid through the Ministry of War? The Treasury stated that they were not prepared to continue payment unless the Eastern Committee regarded this as urgently necessary. His own view was that it was desirable that we should, in due course, be relieved of this burden, but that it was not advisable too abruptly to discontinue the payment. We should go on paying for the present without in any way committing ourselves.

Mr. Oliphant said that payment through the Ministry of War was the preferable course for various reasons, among which was, that it gave a more Persian complexion to the transaction, while it would be a check if both Starosselski and the Minister of War signed the cheques.

The Chairman said that Sir Charles Marling in his memorandum, which was now before the Committee (E.C.–2842), had warmly urged the retention of the Cossack Brigade, and deprecated any sudden disbandment of that force. He himself thought that for the moment we should continue to pay for it. The Russian commander of the brigade, Starosselski, was, owing to the size of his force and his easy access to the Shah, dictator of the situation, and, until the circumstances were more favourable to ourselves, it would be impolitic to arouse his enmity.

The Committee decided—

That while it was desirable that we should be relieved as soon as possible of the financial burden of paying the Cossack Brigade, the immediate discontinuance of this payment was not advisable.

Middle Eastern Questions: Persia.

4. With reference to the 45th Meeting, Minute 1, the Committee resumed their discussion of the policy which we should pursue in regard to Persia.

The Chairman said that since the last meeting three papers has been circulated to the Committee, one by Sir Hamilton Grant (E.C.–2808), one by Sir Charles Marling (E.C.–2842), and one by by Sir Louis Mallet (E.C.–2865), all of which offered various solutions of the problem. One solution which had been advocated was that we should at once and completely disinterest ourselves in Persia and leave her to go to ruin in her own way. This policy he thought immoral, feeble, and disastrous. It would wipe out the policy, expenditure, and effort of more than a century, and, incidentally, would involve the loss of a trade amounting to 5,000,000*l.* per annum, and the abandonment of our telegraph, consulates, and commercial communities in Persia. Moreover, our withdrawal would create a vacuum which would be filled by somebody, either the Bolsheviks, a reconstituted Russia, or someone else. Further, the repercussion of such a policy would be deplorable in Mesopotamia and India. Another solution that had been suggested was that we should continue our present policy but carry it on in a more ingratiating way with a view to convincing the Persians that we really were her friends. This proposal was plausible on paper but had the fatal objection of being a compromise between the

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extremes of abandonment and a more definite and resolute policy. All who knew the Persians well had opposed this solution, viz., Sir Charles Marling, Sir P. Cox, &c. A third suggestion was that we should contemplate at this stage acting as the mandatory Power for Persia at the Peace Conference. It was not, however, yet certain whether there were to be mandatories, and no invitation to act in this capacity might be issued for some months to come. He doubted if any Power would accept this responsibility, directly it realised what pecuniary burdens were involved. The only lines on which he himself thought we could at the moment proceed were as follows: Certain Persian delegates were now coming to Europe. We ourselves were not aware of their views, nor did we perceive any necessity for their attending the Conference. The Conference itself would probably not desire their presence, but supposing they were admitted they would, he thought, soon find their own level, as the Conference would not want to be bothered with their woes, and would probably turn to us as the only Power willing to make the necessary pecuniary sacrifice for Persia. In any event Persia's case might not be taken for months. The interval, he suggested, might be utilised in discussing the whole case with the delegates with the utmost frankness, which need not be necessarily or immediately minatory. We should say to them "You have to settle your future with us. We have already told you that we are prepared to meet you on certain points, (*a*) we will renew our definite assurances that your integrity and independence will be preserved, (*b*) we are prepared to abrogate the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 in whatever form may be most suitable, (*c*) we would welcome the establishment of a regular national Persian force, of which the first commanding officer should be British, though other nationals might be employed below him, (*d*) similarly, as regards finance, in view of the fact that Great Britain is the paymaster of Persia, the chief financial adviser at the head of a common body, which might be recruited from different nationalities, should also be British, (*e*) we are anxious to take away our troops both in the north and south of your country directly Persia is secure from invasion on the north, and the roads of communication are secure in the south." If the delegates refused to meet us on these lines we might then say: "This is our policy; if you are unable to fall in with it we cannot continue our present huge subventions, we must call in our debts and must leave you to bankruptcy and ruin. If, on the other hand, you agree, we will continue our present support on a modified scale." We were anxious to be friendly. But in the last resort the Persians should realise that the iron hand lay beneath the velvet glove.

Lord Robert Cecil said that at one time he had inclined to the view that, so far, the situation in Persia had not benefited by our presence, and he had been disposed to favour the policy of letting her "stew in her own juice." He had now, however, arrived at the same conclusion as the Chairman, and he had been led to this by the danger of Starosselski becoming Dictator. He had, however, one proposal to make. The delegates would probably have no influence in their own country. We should, therefore, simultaneously communicate our terms to Vossugh and other influential men in Persia. He himself thought that Persia would accept the British Commander and Financial Adviser. If however, they refused our position would be dangerous as Starosselski would come forward as the saviour of Persia. We ought, therefore, to think out what our policy would be in this event, that is to say if, in the last resort, Persia refused all our offers.

(*At this stage Lord R. Cecil left the Meeting*).

Sir A. Hirtzel said that the view of Mr. Montagu, who was unable to be present at the meeting, was generally that put forward

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in Sir Hamilton Grant's Paper. That Paper, he submitted, included all the Chairman's points, except that it did not insist on a British Military Commander. Otherwise the difference lay in the manner in which the points were to be put to the Persian Government, and Mr. Montagu hoped that the conciliatory manner would be given a trial first.

Sir Hamilton Grant said the Persians were suspicious of us, and with reason. All the Indian Government wanted was to break down that wall of suspicion which the Anglo-Russian Convention had generated. The Indian Government felt that the minatory policy adopted hitherto had been a failure, and they wanted to give the "velvet glove" a chance. The only difference between Lord Curzon and the Government of India appeared to be in regard to the manner of our communications to the Persian Government—not the substance.

The Committee were generally in favour of the policy recommended by the Chairman and Lord Robert Cecil.

Persian Policy: Finance.

5. The Committee had under consideration a note by Mr. J. M. Keynes (E.C.–2871) on the cost of our existing policy in Persia. The note showed that our aggregate expenditure in that country was now at the rate of 30,000,000*l.* sterling per annum, and there was no sign of early diminution. This sum was for expenditure in Persian currency, and was exclusive of the cost of military stores brought into the country or of the British forces. About 2,300,000*l.* monthly of the above was to be classed as military expenditure, chiefly 1,500,000*l.* for North-West Persia, 290,000*l.* for Bushire, 290,000*l.* for the South Persia Rifles, and 140,000*l.* for the Seistan levy. The note concluded by suggesting that this expenditure seemed out of all proportion to the objects attained and would be difficult to defend in Parliament.

Mr. Keynes said that he had one qualification to make to his note, which was that the military expenditure was based on actuals up to date, and that the basis of the 6,000,000 tomans referred to in the analysis of expenditure appended to his note was retrospective. He would also point out that the exchange was so unfavourable that the actual was not far short of double what it would have been with the pre-war exchange.

The Chairman said that he had been taken aback by Mr. Keynes' note. In his opinion every possible effort should be made to cut down this excessive expenditure at once. He thought it was desirable to know what was the present situation as regards the various levies that had been raised.

Levies.

The Committee decided to instruct the War Office—

(a.) *To inform the General Officer Commander in Chief, Mesopotamia, that military expenditure must be confined to the troops necessary for holding the Bagdad-Caspian line, and that all other ventures should be closed down.*

(b.) *To ascertain for the Committee's information what activities of a military character were being maintained other than those necessary for the protection of the said line.*

South Persia Rifles.

The Chairman further suggested that the moment was opportune to reduce our expenditure on the South Persia Rifles.

The Committee decided—

To instruct the Foreign Office to ask Sir P. Cox to state the earliest moment at which, in his opinion, the South Persia Rifles could be handed over, and our other commitments shut down.

Mr. Oliphant referred to a telegram from Sir P. Cox, dated 20th December, No. 1058 (E. C. 2913), communicating a statement

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from Colonel Gough, giving in detail the expenditure and commitments in South Persia. He drew attention to a paragraph saying that Colonel Gough considered it necessary to provide for an expenditure of 1,000 tomans a day, and also to pay arrears of about 40,000 tomans already due in promises given to tribesmen. He suggested that a reply should be sent that the Treasury would pay whatever our Consul at Shiraz had committed us to, but that sanction could not be given to a payment of 1,000 tomans a day.

The Committee decided—

British Troops in South Persia.

(a.) *To instruct the War Office to find out exactly what is the military situation in South Persia, and to submit to the Committee an appreciation showing* (a) *where exactly our troops are,* (b) *what they are doing, and* (c) *what return we are getting from their employment.*

(b.) *To instruct the Foreign Office to reply to Sir P. Cox that an adequate solution of the problem of our expenditure is compromised by the various and increasing financial commitments of the character described therein, that he must clearly understand that while His Majesty's Government will, of course, redeem any promises actually made, any future expenditure must be regarded as strictly provisional, pending the settlement of the whole financial question.*

Cossack Brigade.

In the course of the brief discussion which followed, Mr. Keynes stated that the cost of the Cossack Brigade was originally charged to Russia's account, but since Russia had gone out of the war it was debited to the War Office. The cost of the division, and that of the South Persia Rifles. was not in the nature of loans to Persia.

Sir Hamilton Grant, in reply to a question, said that any exclusive military expenditure was borne by His Majesty's Government alone, other expenditure being shared between that Government and the Government of India. India's present share was about 10 per cent.

Sir A. Hirtzel informed the Committee that the Secretary of State for India was finding it increasingly difficult to persuade his Council to continue to agree in India's paying half, and that after the war a revision of this system was almost inevitable.

The Chairman said he understood that the money we were spending now was not really a loan to Persia, but was in the nature of subventions without security.

The Committee decided—

To instruct Mr. Keynes to draw up, as soon as he was in possession of the requisite information, a comprehensive statement showing our commitments in Persia, Arabia, and elsewhere.

(Initialled) C. of K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*,
December 30, 1918.

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ANNEX.

Shorthand Notes of a Meeting of the Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office on Monday, 30th December, 1918, at 12 noon.

PERSIA.

LORD CURZON: At our last discussion on Persia we did not come to any very definite conclusion. Indeed there was some conflict of counsel and division of opinion. Since then we have had papers circulated to us by Sir Charles Marling,* Sir Louis Mallet,† and Sir Hamilton Grant,‡ which have cleared away some of the difficulty and obscurity, and in my own mind I feel very much clearer than I did before as to the kind of decision to which we ought to come. Most of the papers balance against each other the various possible solutions, and if we run through them we shall see that most of them can be dismissed instanter.

There is first the solution which found some favour with the Secretary of State for India, namely, that we should disinterest ourselves completely in Persia; that we should at the earliest possible date (and he would have liked to start at once) withdraw our troops, cease our subsidies, and, in the words of Sir Charles Marling, "leave Persia to go to the devil in her own way." I take it that this policy would please the Persians better than any other, but I submit to this Committee that it would be immoral, feeble, and disastrous. It would tear up the whole work of more than a century in Persia, which has cost us not only many many millions of money, but has involved us in great political and moral obligations, which, in my judgment, it is quite impossible to escape or ignore. It would mean sacrificing a trade which is valued at the present moment at five millions a year, and under better conditions might be greatly increased, all the more so that Russian competition in the north has largely disappeared. It would be throwing millions of money, even if you confine it to our present expenditure, which is for the first time apparent in this Treasury paper, into the sea. It would mean the abandonment of our telegraph stations, our consuls, our commercial communities, and in fact our position in Persia altogether.

If anybody imagines that this would really quit us of Persian responsibility he really must be blind. It would not only not relieve us of responsibility, but it would recreate it in a very short time in a much more serious form. Persia may wish to go to the devil in her own way, but there are people round about who will not allow her, and the moment you create a vacuum there, in her deplorable state of disorganisation and weakness, somebody, we do not know whether it will be the Bolsheviks or the Turks or a revived Russia, will come in to fill the place, and if nobody comes in to do so, Starosselski and his guard will become dictators. The repercussion of such a situation both upon India and Mesopotamia would be absolutely deplorable. Therefore I hope that we shall spend not five seconds more of thought in deciding that the suggestion that we should clear out altogether and leave the Persians to stew in their own juice is, in the circumstances of the case, impracticable.

Then there is the policy of the Government of India, which has been put forward in a very able and persuasive paper by Sir Hamilton Grant. That is the suggestion that we should go on with our present policy, but do it in a more ingratiating way; use rather nicer phrases and try to humour the Persian National Government more than the Government of India thinks that we have so far done, and that our better manners should take the form of repeating the statements we have already made in a pleasanter way and of coupling them with others which we are already or may be willing to make, and that somehow or other we should convince Persia that we really are her friends, that we are willing to go on paying, but we want them, as far as possible, to follow their own inclinations, and that while we remain a financial support we do not wish to be a political nuisance. That is very plausible on paper, but I think that it has the fatal objection of being a compromise, as Lord Robert Cecil pointed out the other day, between the two extreme solutions of complete abandonment and a more resolute policy. It is to be noted that all the authorities who speak with actual knowledge of Persia itself are against it. Sir Percy Cox is strongly against it, and he has argued against it in more than one well-poised telegram. Sir Charles Marling is also against it. I believe

* E.C., 2842. † E.C., 2865. ‡ 2802.

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that the representatives of the Foreign Office here who have Persian experience are against it. With all respect to the policy, which seems to me to be the best paper policy, I cannot regard it as a practical policy in the circumstances.

Then it may be said, What are you coming to? The third suggestion which has been made is one which I think for the moment is also out of the question. It is that we should contemplate at this stage acting as the mandatory of the Powers or the League of Nations as regards Persia. I am not at all clear myself that the demand will ever be made upon us. It is by no means certain that mandatories are going to be created. Before you settle whether there are going to be mandatory powers all over the world, you have to constitute the League of Nations to give the invitation. I therefore should not be disposed to spend much time in discussing whether or not we should accept the invitation, because it has not yet been given, and it is not likely to be given for some months to come, if at all, and the whole situation may have changed when that moment arrives. Nor I think need we trouble ourselves very much at this stage about the idea of a mandate being given to somebody other than ourselves. As soon as they have any kind of hint as to the financial obligations that are entailed, I do not think that there is any Power in the world who would look at it. If there is a question of some neutral State being given the mandate, with ourselves finding the means in the background, it is quite clear that such a solution can only be arrived at in the form in which we decide to share it, and with our consent.

So we come to what I think are really the only solutions with which we can proceed at the moment. I speak with deference to the Foreign Office. I do not know that I am expressing their views. What I am saying is rather the result of my own study of the papers and careful reflection on the situation during the last few days. Persian delegates are coming over here. We are rather doubtful as to their political character and complexion. We have grave suspicions of the objects with which they come. We would like to keep them away from the Peace Conference, because, to tell the truth, we see no reason why Persia should be represented there at all, or why her case should be stated. I do not imagine, therefore, that we shall give her any particular encouragement. However, that is a matter which rests with the members of the Peace Conference when they are assembled. My own view is that their inclination will be not to have Persia there at all. They will have such a mass of business that they will not want to be bothered with these outside problems. But it may be that, arising out of the position of Russia or the interests of Germany, or somehow or other Persia will come in; and the Foreign Office, I think, is quite right in its printed paper in providing for that emergency and suggesting the line that we should take should that situation arise. Let us suppose the worst. Let us suppose that the Persians are admitted to some discussion at the Peace Conference or a committee of the Peace Conference. My own disposition is to think that they will very soon find their own level, that the greater part of these things will not interest the Peace Conference at all, that it will be seen that they have no connection with the war, and that Persia is really out to fight a battle for selfish interests, and that, presently, when it is discovered that the only people who either have found money or are willing to find money are ourselves, whatever body or committee is dealing with the matter will turn to us and say, "What are you prepared to do? Are you willing to go on? What is the solution that you propose?" Therefore, in the extreme case of the Persians getting to the Peace Conference, I am not very much alarmed at the issue.

What I rather have in view is a solution either outside the Peace Conference or concurrently with the Peace Conference. Let us suppose that these envoys appear on the scene. It will be many weeks, and I daresay it may be months, before their case is taken in Paris. In that interval they will be in contact with us. They will very likely come to this country. They will see representatives of the Foreign Office in Paris. My own advice on the whole is that they be spoken to with the utmost frankness, and that frankness need not be of a purely minatory character, because it can perfectly well contain the kind of assurances as regards our policy in the future for which the Government of India plead. It will be possible to say to them: "You are going to get nothing out of the Peace Conference when you go there. If you think that you are, try your best and you will probably be disappointed. The grave misunderstanding which exists we are as anxious as you are to remove, but you have to realise the facts of the situation. The points on which we are willing to meet you are well known. Let us define them again, and in a manner most agreeable to yourselves. The assurances as to your independence and integrity we are willing to renew to you in any form, and if need be to win the sanction of the Conference to them. The abrogation of the Convention of 1907 we will carry out in whatever form the circumstances which exist at the present time render

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it possible for us to do. As to the constitution of a national military force, that is a thing which we have long advocated, and which we should like to see started at once. We have put the South Persia Rifles into the pool; let the Russians put the Cossacks into it, and you yourselves can contribute to the pool your Persian gendarmerie and troops. Let us begin to constitute the national army or the national force of Persia at once." Here comes in a suggestion, made for the first time to my knowledge, in Sir Charles Marling's Paper. He says, and says rightly, that if such a force is constituted, and if money is to be found for it to any considerable extent by this country, the commander ought to be an Englishman, but he makes the suggestion that it does not follow from that that the other European officers who act under him should be Englishmen too, and he evidently contemplates a force the officers of which are drawn from several European States, but the chief controlling head of which should be an Englishman. The only analogous situation that I can recall is the Customs administration in China, where you had representatives of all sorts of nationalities under, as a rule, an Englishman at the head. At any rate, Sir Robert Hart was there for twenty or thirty years. So strong was the position of the head of the Customs that when Hart retired, as the Foreign Office will remember, there was a tremendous struggle on the part of the various Powers to try to get the place if they could, on the ground that the man who was at the head really coloured and controlled the whole of the administration. Therefore I do not think that the idea that a British officer at the head must involve British officers all the way down need necessarily be entertained, and there is something in Sir Charles Marling's point of view which is worthy of consideration.

The same with regard to finance. I never agreed more strongly with the view of the Foreign Office than when they laid down most definitely that the prodigious financial stake which we have in Persia, if it is to be continued on any scale at all, must involve a British financial adviser at the head of affairs. Here, again, Sir Charles Marling makes a suggestion. He suggests that the fact that you have an Englishman at the head need not necessarily involve that the subordinates must be Englishmen.

Lastly, in this conversation with the Persians, I would say, as we have already said more than once, that we want to clear out our troops as soon as we can, that we do not want to maintain an Indian force in Ispahan or Shiraz; we only want to guarantee the security of the trade routes. We do not want, any longer than we are obliged, to maintain a force on the line Baghdad–Hamadan and the Caspian; we only want to safeguard Persia herself from worse dangers. Then, putting our cards on the table, and pointing out what our policy should be, I would remember that it is in our power to threaten. I would say to the Persian envoys, "We have told you clearly what our ideas are. Unless you fall in with them we must say frankly that we cannot go on any longer. This gigantic expenditure on Persia, amounting to sums of something like 30 millions a year, cannot go on in any case on that scale. No doubt that is for the moment very largely due to the British military occupation, which we hope to terminate at the earliest possible moment, but even that part which is non-military cannot be continued. We are willing to continue payments on a moderate scale for definite objects which we will discuss with you, but beyond that we cannot go. If you do not accept this situation, we must tell you frankly that we stop the thing altogether; we cease these subsidies. We ask for the settlement of our claims, for the return of the moratorium and all the various other debts. Unless you fall in with this line of policy, we shall make ourselves as disagreeable as we can." That is the kind of policy which I am disposed to recommend. I cannot think that if the Persian representatives, provided we were backed up as we should be by Nasr-ul-Mulk, who is a sensible and patriotic man, had that situation put before them, they could deliberately go and ruin their country by refusing such an offer. But suppose they do? Suppose that, excited by the expectation of what they are going to get in Paris, they say, "We prefer to go to Paris," I should say, "Go," and then, when they have had their tumble they will come back to us in a few months' time and will accept with gratitude the terms which they may have refused a month or two before.

I have had no opportunity of consulting either the Foreign Office or the India Office about the matter, and what I have given you is only my own opinion.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I have arrived at the same conclusion. I was very much attracted at one time by the suggestion that really it was not justifiable for us to go on spending this amount of money in Persia, that we had very little interest in the place, that it was not at all certain that the good government of Persia really mattered to us, and further that apparently our interference had not so far, for various reasons, conduced to the improvement of the government of Persia, but that, on the

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contrary, the government had become decidedly worse than it was when we had relatively less to do with them. Therefore I was disposed to think that there was a good deal to be said for the "stewing in their own juice" policy. But, on the whole, I do not think that it is practicable and, owing to the presence of Starosselski and his division, I think that the immediate result, if we were to disinterest ourselves altogether, would be that Starosselski would take command, and if he is a man of any ability he probably could make the thing pay and could find enough money in Persia to pay his force and become the ruler of Persia. Therefore I have come to the conclusion that we ought to take the course that Lord Curzon suggests. I am all for saying all these things to the Persian delegates. I do not think that it matters very much what we say to them, because it is exceedingly unlikely that they will have any influence in their own country when they get back. Therefore, the really important thing is to say all these things at the same time to Vossugh-ed-Dowleh and the people who really matter out there. I think that we should say them simultaneously to the two sets of people. I think that the probability is that if the thing is done properly the Persians will accept the two essential things, a financial adviser and a British commander of the forces. Whether they are to have subordinate officers who are British or not does not seem to me to matter very much. If they do not accept the two essential things, we shall be in a dangerous position. There is a danger, not a very great one, that the Persians might say, "You cannot get anything out of us"—which is, unfortunately, true—"except by a military occupation, and we do not believe that your people will allow you to have a military occupation," and Starosselski would be at the back of any such movement as that, and he would say that he would govern the country and pay his forces out of the country on a very reduced scale. I do not think that that is very likely, but I think it would be worth while to consider what course we should take in such a case as that. What are we prepared to do? Are we prepared to send a force and pay the bill? I think that it is exceedingly doubtful whether we are.

LORD CURZON: I do not think that it is necessary to answer your question now. It would be very difficult to do so. I think the case will be settled by cash.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I hope so.

LORD CURZON: It is all very well to say that Starosselski, where he has got hold of the country, will be able to pay his troops and so on. It will take some considerable time before he does it, and every Persian wants a squeeze. Starosselski, whatever his resources may be, will never be able to go on paying these subventions not merely to the Persian Government but to the Shah.

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I hope that that is so. I always rather like, before embarking upon a policy, to think of the possible results supposing that everything goes wrong. Conceivably you might have some philanthropic American millionaire helping. You cannot tell. I cannot give any answer, but I would rather like to know what in the last resort we would do supposing that the Persians refused to think about our offers and said, "No, they proposed to go on and have independence and that they would not have a financial adviser or a British commander and that we could do our worst." I think that that is very unlikely, but I would like to know exactly what we should do under those circumstances. Now, I am afraid I must go.

LORD CURZON: You go at a very awkward moment. You agree generally with the line of policy I sketched out?

LORD ROBERT CECIL: I do, but I would like that particular point cleared up somehow if it can be.

(*Lord R. Cecil withdrew at this point.*)

SIR A. HIRTZEL: Mr. Montagu strongly supports the proposals made by Sir Hamilton Grant, which, he thinks, are workable in themselves, and offer a last possibility of reform within the limits of reasonable cost. He has not had the advantage of hearing your statement; but I cannot help thinking that if he had heard it he would have felt that, although you rejected Sir Hamilton Grant's proposals, the line of policy that you propose differs from it in substance really only very slightly. I fancy that all the points that you suggested should be put to the Persian representatives, including the threat, are contained in Sir Hamilton Grant's proposals, except the insistence on the British military commander which Sir Hamilton Grant would have left optional to the Persian Government. If that is so, the only difference is in the way in which the thing is to be put. I think that Mr. Montagu felt and would still feel very much that it is worth while making the sort of bid which Sir Hamilton Grant

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and the Government of India propose for the whole-hearted support of the Persian Government. I do not think that that is really inconsistent with what you propose, because talking to them frankly does not exclude appealing to their good-will and putting ourselves forward once more as their genuine friends. I think that Mr. Montagu would throw the stress on that line of thought rather than on the frankness and the threat. The threat could be kept in the background.

LORD CURZON: There is substance in what you say, because a good deal of what Sir Hamilton Grant has suggested I propose to do, but in a different way. What I dissent from in his proposals is the kind of declaration which he suggests should be made, namely, that the policy which we have been obliged to take in Persia has not unnaturally aroused suspicions as to our intentions in that country. I would not make any such admission. Neither would I be willing to say that all His Majesty's Government asks of the Persian Government is that they will accept the assistance of British financial advisers in the regulation of their finances. That is by no means all. We want a different attitude on their part in every department of administration and policy. I would not go and take off my hat to the Persians in the courtier-like way he proposes. I do not believe in them. Giving their assurances and making them gifts is like pouring water into a sieve. I would now show them that within the velvet glove is the iron hand. We have never shown it to them all this time. We have never had the pluck to say to them, "You are in our hands absolutely to do as we please." I would first say, "This is what we desire and are willing to do with your consent"; supposing that they reply "we cannot allow that for a moment," then I would say "I think that you must realise the situation," and I would be perfectly firm about it. The suggestion of the Government of India and of Sir Hamilton Grant is all on the lines of resuming the old game in a rather more friendly and perhaps rather more dexterous manner, the policy which I hold in the last resort to be impracticable, of trying to keep going the existing rather compromising and ineffective situation.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think that there is no doubt whatever that the Persians are suspicious of us, and personally I think they have every reason to be. I think that we have been forced by the Anglo-Russian Convention into an attitude in Persia which was not compatible with our pledges of respecting their integrity and independence. Since the time of that convention there is no doubt a great deal of suspicion and distrust have been created in Persia against us, which have not been decreased by the events of the war. All that the Government of India desires is to break down that wall of suspicion. It is that wall of suspicion that has caused the ruin of the South Persia Rifles and the failure of that extremely expensive scheme. It is that wall of suspicion which has involved us in that very unnecessary expedition, which is costing us 290,000*l.* a month at present.

LORD CURZON: That is the very last thing that we wanted here.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Yes; but that is the result of the suspicion.

LORD CURZON: That was a Government of India expedition.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: It was never wished for by the Government of India.

LORD CURZON: On this point (you were not here then) I took up the strongest possible line against any expedition from Bushire. I said that the only force that ought to be sent from India, if any was required, should go to Bunder Abbas and should march inland, if necessary, in order to support Sykes at Shiraz, but a big expedition from the coast I strongly resisted here. We were overruled, however, by the Commander-in-Chief in India, who insisted upon it.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: It was a mattery of military technique.

LORD CURZON: We did not want an expedition at all. We did not even want a force on a considerable scale to go; but if any force was required we said (Mr. Oliphant will remember this very well) "Let such force go from Bunder Abbas; but no military expedition should get caught up in the Tangistani Hills."

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I think that there must have been a misunderstanding on the subject. I was in the closest touch with Munro at the time, and there was no man who was more averse from this expedition, and there is nothing that he deplores more. He would have wriggled out of it every possible way he could. He had the impression that His Majesty's Government regarded it as the only solution.

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MR. OLIPHANT: I am not conscious of having seen any memorandum here advocating starting from Bushire. My impression is that the first that we heard of it was after Cox had had a discussion at Bushire after leaving India. He telegraphed and said that certain events were taking place and that troops ought to be sent inland. At this table there was raised the question of the impossibility of keeping troops in the lowlands owing to the climate.

LORD CURZON: And still further on the undesirability of involving them in military operations when they got into the hills. I was strong about it. Still this is really a side issue.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: The main issue is that it appears to the Government of India that the general frame of mind in Persia means that we will never be able to do any good with them until we can alter that frame of mind. There are two views. One view is that we can do everything we want in Persia by cash and terrorism. The other view is that we have tried cash and threats long enough, and that we may possibly be able to do something by adopting the other line, the line which we find has paid us every time in Afghanistan and on the North-West Frontier, the line of the velvet glove.

LORD CURZON: There usually has to be cash inside it.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: Without the velvet glove the cash would not have done its work. The only point of disagreement between you and the Government of India is as to the way in which we should work. We say, give the velvet glove a chance. We have never given it a chance. You tell me that Sir Charles Marling does not agree, and that other people who know Persia do not agree. We have consulted a great many people who do know Persia, and I am in constant touch with people who know Persia, and a great many of them do agree. At any rate the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The military policy which we have adopted hitherto all through Sir Charles Marling's time has been, I think I may say without disrespect, a failure. All that the Government of India says is, "Let us try something else. We do not say that it will succeed, but we hope that it will succeed. Give it a chance. Give the velvet glove a chance for a month or two months or six months, and try to get the Persian people into a frame of mind in which they will be friendly disposed towards us, will readily accept our financial adviser, and will possibly even accept our British commander of the forces." At the present moment we feel practically convinced that, after the lamentable Sykes' experiment, they will have nothing to do with a British commander, and that we would meet with a flat refusal there unless we absolutely used force to put in our man.

LORD CURZON: That would not be a fair criticism to make, because Sykes was not put in command of the South Persia Rifles as a military commander at all; he was selected because he had served for many years in Persia, and was supposed to be acceptable to the Persians and to know the Persian character and people. Obviously, if there was a question of a military adviser you would pick a man of great experience and rank, and you would have a real soldier.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: I do not think his failure was due to his not being a soldier.

LORD CURZON: The argument that Sykes had been a failure would not be an argument against appointing a British commander of a different type elsewhere.

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: The Persian people would not be disposed to agree to such a commander.

LORD CURZON: By "the Persian people" you mean the Nationalists at Teheran?

SIR HAMILTON GRANT: The authorities differ as to that. There is a public opinion which destroys Cabinets and which makes Cabinets and without which a Cabinet cannot be successful. All that we want is that you should give this policy a chance. If it fails we will not be any worse off. If it should fail we can take the more resolute line that you recommend.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*,
December 30, 1918.

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Lord Curzon

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Printed for the War Cabinet. January 1919.

SECRET.

E.C. 49th Minutes.

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WAR CABINET.

EASTERN COMMITTEE.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Committee held in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office, on Tuesday, January 7, 1919, at 1 P.M.

Present:

The Right Hon. the EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. (*in the Chair*).

The Right Hon. E. S. MONTAGU, M.P., Secretary of State for India.

The following also attended:

Mr. J. E. SHUCKBURGH, C.B., India Office.
Lieut.-General SIR H. V. COX, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.S.I., Military Secretary, India Office.
Major-General W. THWAITES, C.B., Director of Military Intelligence.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. STORR, C.B. (*Secretary*).

Future of the Eastern Committee.

1. THE Chairman said that he thought that the present was a convenient moment for members to consider what recommendations they should submit to the Cabinet in regard to the future of the Committee. The Committee owed its origin to a decision of the War Cabinet, taken at a meeting held on the 21st March, 1918 (W.C.-369, Minute 11), that the Eastern Committee should supersede the functions of the Persia and Middle East Committees, and that the constitution and scope of the new Committee should be as outlined in a memorandum by himself (G.T.-3905). The circumstances in which the Committee had come into being no longer obtained. A new Ministry was in process of formation; of the original members General Smuts had resigned, Mr. Balfour and Lord Robert Cecil (who had taken Mr. Balfour's place on the Committee on his assuming the duties of Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) were in Paris, and he (Lord Curzon) had been asked by the Prime Minister to take over the control of the Foreign Department in their absence; and, finally, hostilities had ceased on the signing of the armistice, and would not, it was to be hoped, be resumed. The Chairman suggested that two courses were open to the Committee: (*a*) To recommend to the Cabinet that the Committee should continue to function on the present lines, a course to which there were various objections; and (*b*) to recommend that the Committee be dissolved and its functions in the future

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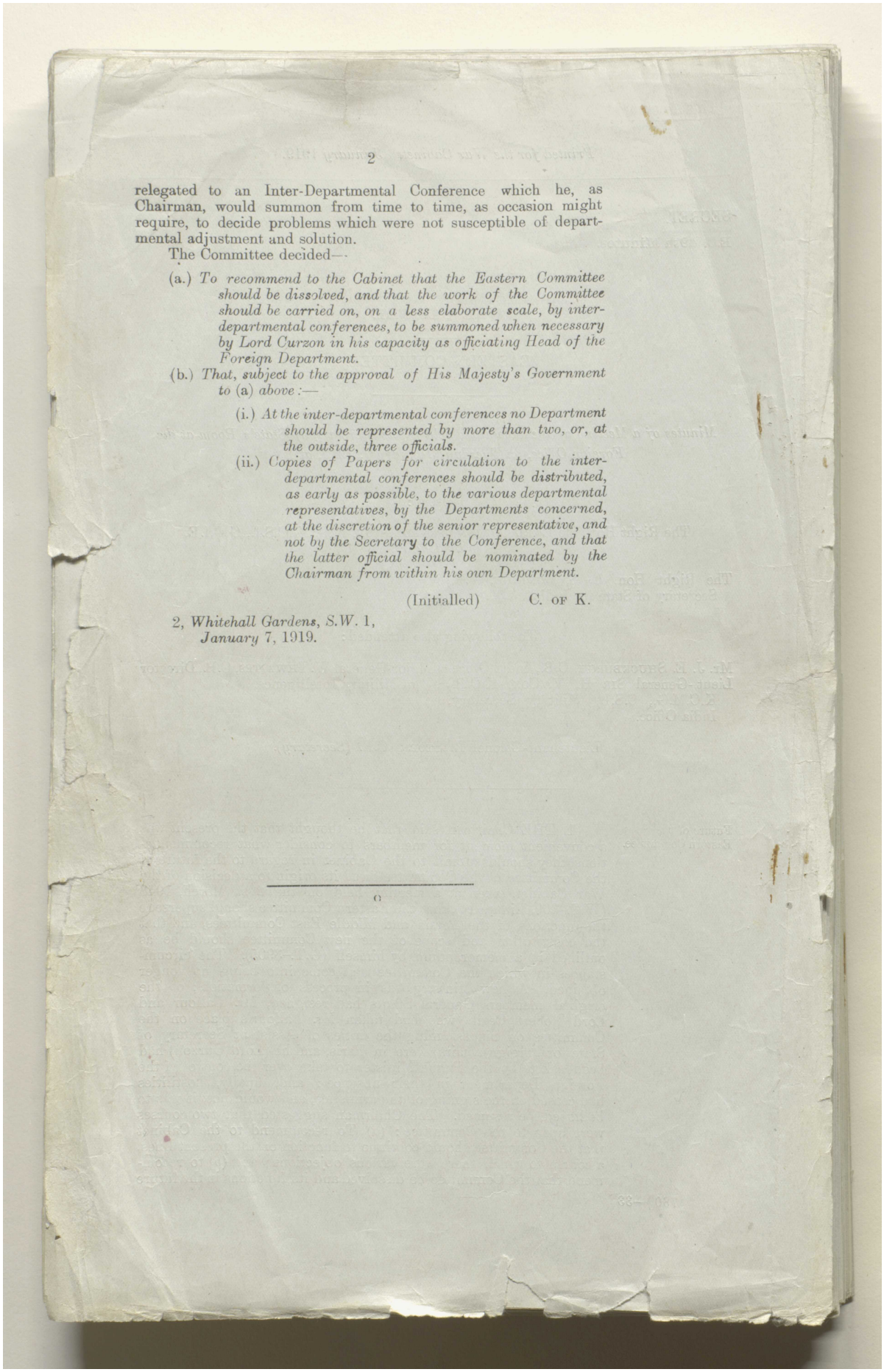

relegated to an Inter-Departmental Conference which he, as Chairman, would summon from time to time, as occasion might require, to decide problems which were not susceptible of departmental adjustment and solution.

The Committee decided—

(a.) *To recommend to the Cabinet that the Eastern Committee should be dissolved, and that the work of the Committee should be carried on, on a less elaborate scale, by inter-departmental conferences, to be summoned when necessary by Lord Curzon in his capacity as officiating Head of the Foreign Department.*

(b.) *That, subject to the approval of His Majesty's Government to* (a) *above:—*

(i.) *At the inter-departmental conferences no Department should be represented by more than two, or, at the outside, three officials.*

(ii.) *Copies of Papers for circulation to the inter-departmental conferences should be distributed, as early as possible, to the various departmental representatives, by the Departments concerned, at the discretion of the senior representative, and not by the Secretary to the Conference, and that the latter official should be nominated by the Chairman from within his own Department.*

(Initialled) C. OF K.

2, *Whitehall Gardens*, S.W. 1,
January 7, 1919.

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